

WEEKLY FREE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



edf ENERGY London and South of England Media Awards

Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk July 10, 2016

North & West edition No 720

TRANSPORT

Stack site sparks legal threats

Government confirms £2.5m lorry park location

ASYLUM

Warning over strain on services

County council concern over unaccompanied child refugees

POLITICS

Five councils in merger talks

Authorities in east of county plan 'super district'

EVENTS

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Is now the time for the changing of the guard?

WHILE it is easy to get distracted by the remarkable comings and goings in Westminster since the shock Brexit vote, the chances are many of us will soon see some potential seismic shifts in the plates of local government right here in Kent.

As we report inside, five councils in the east of the county are holding talks about a merger. So far, the suggestion is simply of some sort of 'super district' authority. And you can understand why they'd do such a thing. The relentless funding reductions has cut local government to the bone and started gnawing into the marrow.

Whether a merged body is the result of genuine austerity, or stealth ideology remains to be seen.

What is certain, however, is that Kent County Council should be shifting rather uncomfortably in its seat right now. Because even if they are not saying it out loud now, the



Editor **Chris Britcher**

shift to creating a unitary authority and gaining more control over local services is surely being discussed in hushed tones.

The very big question of 'do we need Kent County Council should there be a teaming up of Kent's local authorities?' is never more relevant. While those in the west insist no talks are taking place right now, they would be failing in their duties if it hasn't at least appeared on their radar and formed the basis of some informal discussions. This is all about public money after all.

Regardless of the outcome, it's hard to think that east Kent will not benefit from more joined up thinking.

There is an east-west divide in the county and one body championing its position can surely only be a positive. If you thought Westminster was feisty, we may get a taste of that right here before we know it.

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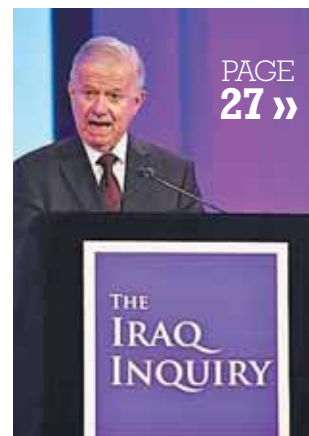
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EU chief issues rallying cry to uncertain farmers

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

THE European commissioner for agriculture and rural development issued a rallying call to Kent farmers concerned over the implications of Brexit this week.

Speaking at the Kent County Show in Detling on Friday, Phil Hogan told those involved in local agriculture "we all need to make the best of it".

With farmers receiving subsidies from the European Union, access to the single market which is crucial for trade and a pool of labour willing to do seasonal jobs that are perhaps not so popular in Britain, plenty are concerned about their future.

But while Mr Hogan admitted he was disappointed by the result, he called for the industry to come together and embrace its latest challenge.

"I appreciate the decision to leave the European Union has created some uncertainty and it will take some time for things to settle down," he said.

"I want to make it explicitly clear I will continue to do my best for



POSITIVITY: EU commissioner Phil Hogan. Photo: Andy Archer

British farmers and their vital work while the UK remains a member, and I hope the arrangements that we can put in place following the negotiations will maintain the central position of farmers in the rural life and economy of this country.

"We need to be calm about this issue, we need to move on with the new relationship we're going to have and I'm sure the networks you all have had in place over 40

years will not disappear because of a different political arrangement. "Divorce is never easy but we all need to make the best of it."

Joined by NFU president Meurig Raymond and Tim Breitmeyer, deputy president of the CLA, Mr Hogan said this year's show was an ideal opportunity to exhibit the work of Kent farmers.

"I never tire of attending events like these," he added.

"I love coming to county shows,

and someone who grew up on a farm and has been representing a rural constituency for 30 years. I appreciate farming in spite of the difficulties and uncertainties is still a lively and positive place to be.

"I hope that British agriculture will go from strength to strength in the years ahead."

For images and full coverage of this year's Kent County Show, see pages 22 and 23 of this week's newspaper.

'Worst ever' Ofsted as trust prepares to hand over 'inadequate' school

AN EDUCATION advisor says an Ofsted report on a Medway primary is the "worst ever" after a shocking string of failings.

The list of concerns raised by the school inspectors included the safety of pupils being "at risk", attainment and progress "fallen catastrophically", poor management of pupils' behaviour by staff, and weak management and leadership at all levels.

At one stage, inspectors had to intervene to protect children as they misbehaved during a "chaotic situation" during lunch.

Former Gravesend head teacher Peter Read, who runs Kent Independent Education Advice, admits he was dismayed at the findings from Wayfield Primary in Chatham which was rated as 'inadequate' across the board.

He said: "Surely this is the worst ever performer in a crowded field in Medway."

And he points the guilty finger at

the trust which runs the school. He explained: "What ought to happen next is that Griffin Trust ought to be closed down completely and all its schools reallocated to a trust with a known record of achievement, so that no other children suffer like this."

In response, the trust told us: "Our school improvement team continue to work hard with Wayfield Primary to address the points raised by Ofsted. In the face of current teacher shortages, securing a strong leadership team for Wayfield Primary School has proved challenging.

"Having consulted closely with the regional school commissioner for south east England and south London, it was decided in April that Wayfield Primary School's long term future would be best served by joining with The Primary First Trust from 1 September 2016.

"We are working with the Primary First Trust to ensure a smooth transition."

Golden girl Asher-Smith in perfect preparation for Rio

ORPINGTON sprinter Dina Asher-Smith sent out a warning to her rivals for Olympic glory this summer after winning gold at the European Championships in Amsterdam on Thursday night.

The 20-year-old powered through the field to land her first senior major title, and become the first British woman to win the European 200m crown, claiming a

dominant victory in a season's best time of 22.37 seconds.

The star, who has already clinched her place on the plane to Rio, has blazed a trail in her young career and is widely regarded as one of the world's top talents.

London 2012 long jump champ Greg Rutherford made it a night of double gold for Britain as he prepares to defend his crown.

Driver who raced wrong way down M26 gets jail sentence

A MOTORIST who drove the wrong way down the M26 in a high-speed police chase has been jailed for 16 months.

Junior Lowe, 34, of Catford - a driver suspected of driving while disqualified - was being pursued by the Metropolitan Police and made its way into Kent.

Having left the M25 and joined the M20 coastbound, Lowe hit

speeds of 110mph and as he reached the junction with the M26 slip at junction three, he turned and travelled up the M26 in the wrong direction.

Lowe was arrested by Kent officers on the A20. He pleaded guilty to dangerous driving, driving whilst disqualified and driving without insurance, he was jailed at Maidstone Crown Court.



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Visit us this weekend at the Kent County Show

IF YOU are among the tens of thousands of people heading to the Kent County Show this weekend, don't forget to visit us while you're there.

We have a stand at the showground in Detling and will be handing out copies of this weekend's paper as well as promoting our sister title – the award-winning glossy monthly magazine Kent Life.

We are on stand 413 which is close to the Astor Ring, throughout the weekend.

We have a host of pictures on pages 22-23 of this weekend's paper, and we'll have a full review of the event in next weekend's edition.

And don't forget to visit www.kentnews.co.uk for all the latest news.



IN: New chairman Clive Stevens

Retail expert quits Turner gallery role

CLIVE Stevens has been confirmed as the new chair of the Turner Contemporary – replacing Stephen Sunnucks who has stepped down less than six months into the role.

Mr Sunnucks, whose retail experience had been earmarked as helping enhance revenue streams for the gallery in Margate, only took over the position in December.

But he resigned recently due to personal reasons. He was previously head of fashion chain Gap Global.

His replacement is Clive Stevens, a founding trustee and vice chair of the gallery since 2008.

A chartered accountant, he became a partner in the firm Kreston Reeves in 1989 and held the post until 2013. He is now the firm's chairman.

Mr Stevens said: "The gallery's world-class programme inspires and delights audiences and plays a real role in the social and economic regeneration of Margate and east Kent. The future will not be without challenges but there are massive opportunities for continued growth and success."

Since opening in 2011, the gallery has welcomed over two million visits, contributed more than £41m into the local economy through tourism and inward investment, and engaged over 100,000 people with its learning programme.

Grammar school looks to rebuild faith after fiasco over academy switch

By Chris Britcher

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CHAIRMAN of the governing body of a grammar school which found itself at the centre of a huge row over plans to become an academy has resigned.

Dr Ash Rehal had stood behind head teacher Jane Robinson during the Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School's aborted attempt to become an academy and take over management of the nearby Spires Academy.

But after an unprecedented backlash, which saw teachers threaten strike action, pupils stage a walk-out and parents mount a vocal campaign, it was called off.

This week, while no mention was made of Mrs Robinson's future at the school – she currently remains in place but seen her reputation left in tatters as a result of the recent furore – the school sought to calm troubled waters and look to try to rebuild confidence from the community it serves.



DAMAGED: City grammar

In a statement the school's new look board of governors told parents: "The wide scale public opposition, including parents, pupils and staff and the negative reporting of the consultation process has been dam-

aging to the reputation of the school and this is highly regrettable.

"Moving forward, the school governors and Kent County Council are determined to ensure that relationships can be restored under a new climate of openness and transparency.

"Following the resignation of a number of governors, including the chair of governors, and the governing body's decision to withdraw its academy plans in response to the consultation feedback, KCC has identified five new governors including a new chair, to strengthen capacity and restore confidence... A new KCC clerk to the governing body has also been appointed."

The school did confirm its existing relationship with Spires in Sturry would stay in place, although that may be changed if Spires is forced to be taken over by another academy trust. Which seems likely.

The statement added: "The last few months have been a difficult time for the school and the focus should now be on restoring confidence among parents and staff."

£4.4m cash boost to transform airport site

PLANS to transform Rochester Airport have taken a giant stride forward after it was successful in its bid to secure a £4.4m funding boost.

The money, from central government's growth fund was awarded to Medway Council by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. It will go towards the development of the Rochester Airport Technology Park on the site. Subject to planning permission, work will start next year.

First phase works will include hard surfacing of one of the runways, installing runway lighting, building a new control tower and airport hub building, and refurbishing the existing aircraft hangars.

Once completed, the second runway will be closed and the council will begin to plan for the commercial development of the 18 hectares of land made available.

High-value businesses able to offer large numbers of skilled employment opportunities will be sought to take up residence on the site.

Migrant family found in lorry on the M25

A GROUP of suspected migrants were found in a lorry on the M25 last weekend; the latest incident which has been repeated across the county.

Two adults and three children were discovered by officers called to the scene on Saturday.

Kent Police said it received a report that a group of suspected migrants had been found in a lorry travelling on the M25, close to the exit for junction two, for Dartford, shortly after 1.30pm.

A spokeswoman added: "Officers attended the scene and two adults and three children were located."

The Home Office confirmed that two adults and three children were arrested on suspicion of entering the UK illegally and passed to immigration officers for interview.

The family group from Iran have made immigration applications and these will now be considered in line with immigration rules.

Turn to page 14 for a special report on unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Teachers stage walk out in strike action

MORE than 30 schools across the county were either closed or partially closed on Tuesday after teachers walked out on strike.

Some 29 in Kent and eight in Medway were affected by the 24-hour walkout.

Members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) conducted the action in a long-running dispute over school funding, pay and conditions and were joining rallies and marches.

The union said its members had shown strong support for the strike, which it added was being backed by many parents.

"Most schools where action is being taken are affected by closures or reduced subjects," said an NUT spokesman.

The NUT claims funding to schools is being cut, leading to increased workloads for teachers and bigger class sizes.

The union has written to education secretary Nicky Morgan calling for "meaningful" discussions to tackle issues it said were negatively affecting education.

Daring rescue as teenagers get caught out by tide again

By Tom Pyman

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A GROUP of German teenagers on a school trip had to be dramatically rescued after they were cut off by the tide – just weeks after a London trip found itself at the centre of a near identical drama.

The Walmer lifeboat crew was called out at around 10.50am on Tuesday after reports a commercial boat had picked up 10 children stranded on rocks between St Margaret's Bay and Dover.

Last month, 34 children and two adults needed a late night rescue in the same area after the tide trapped them as they walked below the White Cliffs of Dover.

Speaking of this week's incident, Walmer RNLI helmsman Brad Rebbeck said: "When we arrived we found the pilot of a RIB had picked up a group of ten children who had been sat on rocks between St Margaret's Bay and Dover as the tide was rapidly coming in. "Apparently the children were school friends and their teacher had called the coastguard to ask for assistance.

"We understand they had been playing on the beach and the rocks when the tide started coming in a lot faster than they thought it would, effectively cutting them off.

"There were three boys, seven girls, all



SAVED: Lifeboat teams were summoned to rescue the group of youngsters

aged around 14-15 years.

"When we started chatting to them, we realised they were German, and were visiting the UK on a school trip.

"We transferred them from the RIB onto the lifeboat and took them back to St Margaret's Bay to the teacher. We did try to find out more – for example, whether they had seen the signs telling people about the potential dangers of tides – but the language barrier made it quite hard to get the full facts."

Guy Addington, RNLI community inci-

dent reduction manager, said: "I'm pleased these children were recovered safe and well before any harm came to them.

"The RNLI will always launch to people in distress, whatever the reason, but we are trying to encourage people to do everything in their power to prevent getting into danger in the first place.

"Incidents like this highlight how easy it can be to get cut off by the tide whilst out walking. It's easy to get caught out by unexpected tides and waves."

River clean-up after trollies dumped in it

A MAJOR clean-up operation of the River Medway in Tonbridge takes place this week after a report of a number of supermarket trollies being dumped in it.

Using canoes as large floating bins, members of Tonbridge Canoe Club and Tonbridge flood wardens will look to clean up the stretch of river, with council refuse collector Veolia disposing of the items collected.

Garden city's £12m station bridge plans

BOSSES behind Ebbsfleet Garden City are to build a £12 million bridge which will give residents easy access to the international train station.

The 40m-long structure will run from Springhead Park to Station Access Road, above the River Ebbsfleet and cut walking time to eight minutes. It should be completed by early 2019.

Dead dog dumped

A SHOCKED walker discovered a dead dog wrapped in plastic on the beach at Ramsgate this week.

The female German shepherd cross was found in the sheet at around 6pm on Wednesday.

RSPCA inspector Claire Carter said: "We are very concerned about how this poor dog died and how her body came to be here on the beach."

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Plans for 80 homes unveiled for former hospital building

PLANS to develop a derelict former hospital site in Gravesend into housing are gathering pace after an outline planning application was submitted last week.

The application seeks permission to redevelop a 0.35-hectare section of the former Gravesend and North Kent Hospital site, near the centre of the town, with a modern, mixed-use development including up to 80 homes.

Gravesend and North Kent Hospital closed in 2004 following the opening of the Darent Valley Hospital in Dartford.

Limited services continued in the on-site building known as M-block until its closure in 2006.

At the same time, Gravesham Community Hospital, which is unaffected by this application, was



built on part of the site.

It has been declared surplus to NHS requirements by commissioners at NHS England and Dartford Gravesham and Swanley Clinical Commissioning Group, and these

developments are seen as the best solution financially, with receipts from the sale of surplus sites, and any savings, reinvested back in the NHS.

A public consultation will take place before a decision is made.

Postal worker dog attacks high in the TN postcode

AREAS covered by the Tonbridge postcode, which covers huge swathes of the county, has been named among the worst areas in the UK for dog attacks on postmen and women.

According to the latest figures from Royal Mail, areas under the TN postcode saw 56 attacks last year – a figure topped only by the areas of Nottingham and Peterborough.

It comes as Royal Mail launched its fourth annual Dog Awareness Week on Monday to encourage responsible dog ownership.

The number of dog attacks on postmen and women has fallen by 10 per cent on the previous year to 2,660 but despite this reduction, as many as seven postmen and women a day are attacked across the UK.

This figure rises by 10 per cent during the school holidays and in the summer months when parents and children are at home.

In the last year, 36 per cent of dog attacks on postal workers have happened at the front door while 35 per cent took place in the front garden – the equivalent to 1,888 attacks.

Dog Awareness Week is supported by the Communications Workers Union (CWU) and a wide range of organisations and animal charities.

TV presenter and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home ambassador, Paul O'Grady, who lives in Aldington, said: "No one should feel unsafe in the workplace and it's important we as dog owners, take the necessary steps to give postmen this same respect."

Traps set for loose lynx

A MAJOR hunt was under way in Devon on Friday after a lynx went missing from Dartmoor Zoological Park, near Plymouth, just a day after arriving from Port Lympne in Hythe.

The wildcat, called Flaviu, went missing on Thursday morning.

CCTV cameras face chop

SIXTEEN CCTV cameras in Swale are set to be decommissioned after a review found they were not helping tackle crime or antisocial behaviour.

The final decision on the review and the cameras will be made at a Swale Borough Council meeting this week.

Tasty line-up for vegans

VEGANS will flock to Maidstone later this month for the county town's first vegan festival.

Taking place on July 23 at the Union Street Methodist Church, it will feature appearances by chairman of the Vegan Society, Animal Aid and boxer Dan Woodgate.

UCA union wins award

THE students' union at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA), which has a campus in Canterbury, has won the small and specialist students' union award at this year's

National Union of Students (NUS) Awards. It recognises unions with fewer than 20,000 students or based at specialist universities.

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Top Three Stories



1. Did you see assault?

Police in Folkestone calling for witnesses

2. Social care trust contract

KMPT providing detox services in Sussex

3. Historic paedo jailed

Terry Hughes abused a nine-year-old

The Essential Guide:



...to Operation Stack

Everything you need to know about stacking of lorries on the M20



FEATURED PHOTO GALLERY: Olympic champion Victoria Pendleton was among the thousands taking part in the Run or Dye event at Penshurst Place. See pages 28 and 29 of this week's paper for the full story

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Top Three Blogs



1. Bigger than Europe

Why the referendum is insignificant

2. Time to go, Jeremy

Labour leader's race is run

3. Straight outta uni

A young man's first step in the real world

Results of the KoS Online Poll

Who should be the next England manager?

- 1 Sam Allardyce - 43%
- 2 Arsene Wenger - 17%
- 3 Glenn Hoddle - 17%
- 4 Jurgen Klinsmann - 23%

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Kent schoolgirl on the cusp of becoming next prime minister

By Chris Murphy

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

FOR many people, the name Andrea Leadsom meant little until a little over a week ago. Yet this week she is one of just two candidates in the running to not only take over as leader of the Conservative Party, but also become only the second female prime minister in British history.

After securing her place on the shortlist of two candidates who will be put before members of the party, after beating off the challenge of Michael Gove in Thursday's second round, Mrs Leadsom may yet spring a shock against the bookmakers' favourite Theresa May when it goes to a wider vote.

And few will be aware that the MP, who polled 84 votes in Thursday's crunch vote, comfortably ahead of Michael Gove on 46 but a distance behind Mrs May on 199, grew up in Kent.

In the 1970s, she was a student at Tonbridge Grammar School, and even went back to see the place once more recently.

Head teacher Rosemary Joyce at the school in Deakin Leas, told us: "Sadly, we do not have records of her time

here all those years back.

"But we were delighted she decided to return and see us in November 2014.

"She spent some time with students and staff and even went on to some lessons.

"She talked about how physically the school had changed a lot since her time here, but she felt the ethos was very familiar to her from her time at the school.

"She was generous with her time and engaged with the students on that day.

"For our students now, I think it is just great that, whatever their politics, the fact you have got a very successful person who potentially is set to take on the highest office in the country, is a real inspiration for our girls. Particularly for those who got to meet her before all this came up."

Mrs Leadsom was born in Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire in May 1963 and, having moved with her family to Kent, went to the Tonbridge grammar.

On leaving school, she studied political science at Warwick University, and home once more was a small terraced house in Berkshire.

Her mother Judy divorced her builder's merchant father Richard when she was four, and then brought up her three girls while studying to

become a nurse.

Four years later, her mother remarried and ran a furniture shop with her second husband.

Mrs Leadsom married financial company director husband Ben and they now have three children – Fred, 20, Harry, 18, and Charlotte, 12.

Among her supporters is former London mayor Boris Johnson, plus Canterbury MP Julian Brazier, who said: "At this time of economic turbulence, she has a remarkable grasp of the economy with a wealth of experience from the City.

"Throughout the bruising referendum campaign her cool composure showed her to be decisive without ever becoming corrosive. Andrea has the strengths that Britain needs to negotiate a good deal with the European Union and take our great country forward."

She is currently the MP for South Northamptonshire – a seat she won in 2010. She initially said leaving the EU would be a "disaster" but now insists she has been on a "journey" and campaigned to leave after being convinced the bloc was "not reformable".

She has defended herself against accusations that she lacks the experience, pointing out that David Cameron had no experience of government before becoming Tory leader and then prime minister.

Mrs Leadsom has more than two years' experience in government – first becoming a junior minister to George Osborne at the Treasury in 2014.

It is thought the chancellor picked her due to her 25 years' experience working in the City – a career that has come under the spotlight in the leadership race. Mrs Leadsom has been forced to release her CV and then deny she massaged her employment history to make it look like she held more senior roles.

The result of the poll of the 150,000 paid-up members of the Conservative Party will be announced on September 9, ahead of the party conference in Birmingham in October.



RISING: She may be the underdog but few are ruling her out of the race to become the next Tory leader and, in doing so, become only the second female prime minister



RIVAL: Theresa May was overwhelming favourite of MPs but will she win over the 150,000 members too?

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Week ending July 10, 2016 **11**

Legal threat hangs over confirmed Stack site

Government chiefs have announced just where a massive lorry park is to be built but locals have been left fuming

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS are threatening to take legal action after the transport secretary confirmed a major new lorry area will be created near Stanford as a long-term solution to Operation Stack.

The Stanford West site will be designed to hold around 3,600 lorries and construction work will start as soon as possible with spaces available from summer 2017.

The aim is to help keep the M20 moving during disruption to cross-Channel services following the chaos caused last year.

However, it has sparked fury among locals who opposed the plans, particularly after the boost they received in their campaigning last month when proposals were criticised by a House of Commons transport select committee.

A report found the decision to proceed was rushed in reaction to the events of last summer and called on transport ministers to demonstrate the necessity of building the lorry park, including the cost-benefit ratios

of alternative solutions and whether the park is proportionate and appropriate to the scale and frequency of disruption.

It also stressed the need to factor in environmental and social costs on the locality, economic benefits and the long-term costs of operating, maintaining, renewing and, eventually, decommissioning the lorry park.

Matthew Webb, the chairman of Stanford Parish Council, is furious and is planning legal action to overturn the decision.

He told KoS: "It is no real surprise. We are very disappointed – we have been opposing this from the start and will continue to do so.

"We are disappointed the government and secretary of state has not done anything to address concerns raised by the transport select committee in their report saying they don't believe the case has been made for a lorry park.

"So we will continue to campaign to oppose it. We must try and we know it will be difficult. We have taken legal counsel and will try to oppose it in other ways."

Debbie Burton of the campaign group SOS (Smarter Options than Stanford) Kent added: "I'm



CHAOS: Last summer, Operation Stack was in force for 32 days causing major headaches across the county

shellshocked, but as far as I'm concerned the fight is not over.

"We will get together soon to see what the next steps we can take will be.

"I thought they had to respond to the select committee but from what I have seen and heard, they haven't.

"Does this make a mockery of the select committee? I don't know."

The government is exploring using the site for overnight parking of lorries, relieving pressure caused by some drivers parking in unsuitable or illegal locations.

The lorry area will provide parking for up to 3,600 lorries. A Highways England consultation showed strong support for a permanent lorry area to reduce or remove the need to close the M20.

Nearly twice as many people thought it should be located at Stanford West than those who thought it should be built at an alternative site to the north of junction 11.

The proposed site is west of the M20 junction 11 at Stanford West and Balfour Beatty has already been appointed as the lead contractor for the project.

New entry and exit slip roads will be built on the eastbound carriageway, providing direct access to the lorry park.

Hilary Newport, director of CPRE Kent, also reacted angrily to the news, having frequently travelled to Westminster in recent months as part of campaigning against the lorry park.

She told KoS: "It's the wrong solution to the wrong problem – the Port of Dover are demanding money spent on maximising their availability through the M2/A2 corridor.

"And if their ambitions go ahead, this lorry park is in the wrong place, as is the proposed Thames crossing east of Gravesend.

"It's the worst of all possible outcomes and they've made me very cross – it's a complete failure of integrated transport planning.

"Locals have already got Stop24 in their backyard, so it's not fair and completely disingenuous to say they are NIMBYS.

"Last year was dreadful but it was unique and we have so much in place now to stop it ever happening again.

"It's just a knee-jerk reaction that it is leading to the destruction of huge swathes of open space.

"It will be such a blot on the landscape – the motorway and railway integrates into it quite well, but this will be impossible to shield."

Kent County Council's transport chief Matthew Balfour, however, was supportive of the announcement.

He said: "For years we have argued that a solution to the problem of Operation Stack – blighting not only Kent's residents and businesses but much of the UK – needs to be considered, and this is a culmination of that work.

"Last year's Stack had an estimated cost to the Kent and Medway economy of around £1.45m a day and across the country it was estimated to be about £250m a day.

"Alongside appropriate environmental mitigation measures, we believe residents should be quickly and fully compensated for the loss of property value and inability to sell if they need or want to move."

Natalie Chapman, of the Tunbridge Wells-based Freight Transport Association, said: "FTA has been pressing for a permanent solution to the problems caused by Operation Stack so we're delighted that the new lorry area could be ready by next summer.

"This will end the misery for thousands of residents and businesses whose lives have been repeatedly disrupted by Operation Stack."

Despite the local opposition, Shepway District Council was also supportive, with leader David Monk insisting the importance of keeping the M20 open in both directions when lorries cannot cross the Channel, and ensuring local roads are not used either for diversions or parking to mini-

mise impact on residents.

He said: "We will now consider the details of the announcement and make sure that it meets these criteria but we are really pleased that the government have listened to us about the need to provide a solution that works for the people and businesses of Shepway."

Damian Collins, MP for Folkestone and Hythe, added: "I firmly believe that this announcement is a step forward for the constituency and the rest of the county."

Police and crime commissioner Matthew Scott also backed the move saying: "Any measure which can help prevent Operation Stack or reduce the impact of any disruption in future is to be welcomed which is why I'm pleased that a decision has been made on where a relief lorry park should go and that construction on the project will be able to proceed."

Mr Scott and his office will also continue to discuss with government any options for Kent Police receiving additional funding for its role in implementing Stack.

"We also need to continue to look at any other options which could direct lorries away from Kent's busy roads," he added.

Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin said: "The new lorry area by the M20 will deliver better journeys for drivers and will not only support the region's economy but also businesses as far away as Scotland that rely on the M20 to access the Port of Dover and the Channel Tunnel.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England chief executive, added: "We will work closely with residents and local stakeholders to ensure the design of the new lorry area minimises its social and environmental impact, while meeting the wider need to address this issue for Kent and the UK."

The next stage of the project will involve consulting on the details and the environmental impact of the scheme.



THREAT: Parish council chairman Matthew Webb at the Stanford site



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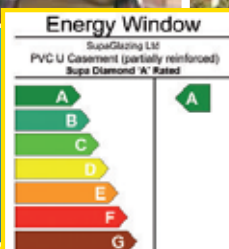
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KOS 2/16



'We can't cope if it happens again' warns children's chief

Kent is shouldering more than its fair share of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and hopes are now pinned on other counties doing what is needed to ensure they are given the life and security they deserve after fleeing from war

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

SOcial services in Kent would not be able to cope if it was to endure a repeat of last summer's influx of refugee children, a council chief has admitted.

Peter Oakford, cabinet member for specialist children's services on Kent County Council, was speaking following the introduction of a new dispersal scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children that has been launched this month.

The scheme is a voluntary transfer arrangement that encourages councils around the country to offer to take such children off the hands of others that are becoming overwhelmed.

Local authorities have a legal duty to care for under 18s who arrive in their area from abroad seeking international protection, and Kent has seen a dramatic spike in the number in its care amid the international migrant crisis.

As the gateway to Britain from Europe, Kent is often the first to receive the children, with some even as young as six arriving on our shores.

"We suggested a dispersal scheme at the beginning of last summer because the arrival rates went through the roof," Cllr Oakford told KoS.

"So far 12 authorities have indicated a willingness to take these young people and there can be two referrals per month, so that's 24 we can transfer from here per month.

"But Kent has around 900 unaccompanied asylum seeking children when we should have below 300.

"We need a lot more help than we are seeing at the moment because that doesn't take into account any new arrivals there may be.

"In June we had 29 arrivals which is way below what we experienced this time last year, and we are pleased to see this drop for the first time."

Eurotunnel has unquestionably beefed up its security in the last year following more than a dozen casualties in the tunnel with migrants trying to reach Folkestone from Calais.

As revealed in KoS earlier this month, the firm has also started deploying two unarmed 'military grade' drones in France to help counter raids by migrants determined to invade the tracks.

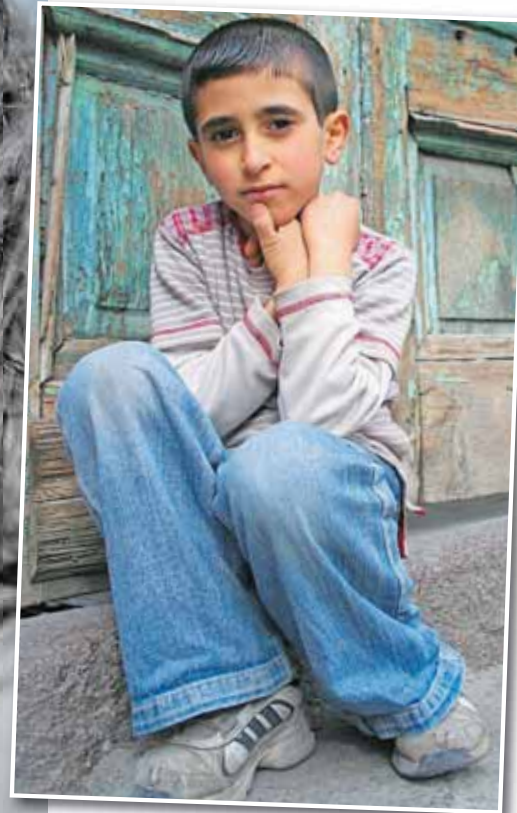


PLANNING: KCC's Peter Oakfield, top, says the county's resources are being stretched as a result of being the first port of call for refugees entering this county. Above, James Brokenshire, the immigration minister

It is claimed there are already some 500 cameras at the Eurotunnel site at Coquelles, but the company feels there are still some 'dead zones' that are not sufficiently covered.

The site is also ringed with both floodlights and almost three miles of 9ft-high fencing that was mostly funded by a £7m contribution from the British government.

However, with dinghies from across the Channel rocking up on Kent's shores multiple times in recent months, the possibility of unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving in the county remains strong.



PRESSURE: Children are finding themselves arriving in this country after being forced to flee their homes after war or the constant threat of violence

Cllr Oakford said the KCC reaction to the Home Office's announcement at the start of this month was a

mixed one – it was pleased there was solid legislation in place, but a voluntary scheme may well

prove insufficient, particularly with only a dozen through the UK so far signing up to help.

"We've said all the way through that the only way it's going to work is with a mandatory scheme," he said.

"We're still not entirely sure how this will work so we'll see how things

Continued on page 16

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Continued from page 15

go over the next couple of months. "Three government ministers wrote to all authorities six to eight months ago asking them to participate in a voluntary scheme and about 100 had been taken by other authorities before the start of the year.

"We have 262 young people placed outside of Kent boundaries because we didn't have the beds or the support workers, so we had to place them with other authorities.

"But matters were complicated further by other councils placing 1,360 of their children in care within Kent, so we're having to deal with that on top of the children that are already here."

The crisis reached something of a crescendo last summer and Cllr Oakford admits he simply doesn't know what would happen if arrival rates were replicated this summer - which Eurotunnel chief executive and chairman Jacques Gouon warned could be the case, with those in Calais desperate to get across before the impact of Brexit, and an expected tightening of borders, comes into force.

Immigration minister James Brokenshire, who is also the MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup, revealed to MPs in April that last year there was a total of 3,043 asylum applications from unaccompanied under 18s, an increase of some 56 per cent on 2014.

"We had schools that couldn't take any more children, we employed every agency social worker we could find and struggled to recruit interpreters too because there's often a language

barrier," Cllr Oakford added "...".ed.

"It puts huge pressure on our system, and if we had a repeat of last summer we simply would not be able to cope.

"It would be an impossible situation and I genuinely don't know what we'd do - the government would have to intervene and mandate a programme of moving them around the country.

"However this time the security is holding firm.

"We are doing everything that is legally required and more, and we try to treat all the children exactly the same but - and it's a big but - I have a very, very strong belief that if every local authority looked after, say, 20 children, the support they would have would be much better than it would with us looking after 1,400 - that's just common sense."

Under the scheme, which was officially launched on July 1, a child arriving in one local authority area already under strain caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children may be transferred to another council with capacity.

The new arrangements were created after extensive consultation with the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and local authorities.

In support of the scheme, the government has also increased the amount of funding that it will provide to local authorities caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, with annual support for each child aged under 16 rising from £34,675 to £41,610.

'20,000 REFUGEE PROMISES REMAINS DESPITE BREXIT'

IN a separate arrangement, outgoing prime minister David Cameron pledged to welcome some 20,000 refugees into Britain by 2020 from Syria back in September, and a Home Office spokesperson confirmed to KoS this week that last month's decision to leave the European Union would have no bearing on that promise.

"It was a government pledge made beforehand, it's completely separate to do with these current negotiations," he said.

"The EU had a quota of refugees it wanted member states to take but this is our own arrangement for people from

outside Europe and we're still on course to deliver that."

Dartford MP and Brexit campaigner Gareth Johnson added: "This agreement is outside of the EU.

"We will not be leaving the EU for two years and many of these people are likely to be arriving in the UK before we leave.

"As I understand the situation, the rest will not be affected either."

Julian Brazier, MP for Canterbury, who also voted Leave in last month's referendum agreed the refugees would still all be delivered on time.

The Home Office spokesperson

also confirmed that there were no plans to implement the mandatory dispersal scheme wanted by KCC anytime soon.

The increased flow of asylum seeking children has been as a result, in part at least, of trouble in Syria.

The war-torn nation has been ripped apart by the fighting, with many seeking to head to Europe for refuge.

Those refugees, who are entitled to claim asylum due to the dangers in their homeland, are frequently confused in the public's perception with economic migrants who seek to move here for work.

Mr Brokenshire said: "The UK has a proud tradition of offering sanctuary to all those in need of protection, including vulnerable asylum-seeking children and ensures their welfare and safety is at the heart of every decision made.

"This scheme has been established to promote a fairer distribution of caring responsibilities across the country in a way that protects the best interests of those children.

"Local authorities have been tremendously generous in caring for migrant children, and we hope many more will come forward and share this important responsibility.

"We will continue to work closely with local authorities, devolved ad-

ministrations and our other partners to implement this scheme, which will support councils such as Kent and Croydon who are caring for high numbers of UASC [unaccompanied asylum seeking children]."

A spokesperson for the British Red Cross said: "We recognise that Kent has always looked after many of the UASCs who reach the UK, a responsibility which has only grown over the last year.

"In light of this, we do support the transfer of newly arrived UASCs to other local authorities in the UK - but it is paramount that this is done with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration."

There is perhaps a perception that

once these children become young adults, authorities feel the job is done and wash their hands of them.

Cllr Oakford insisted that was far from the case at KCC, and that in some instances they remain their responsibility even into their mid-twenties.

"As they get towards 18 they can apply for asylum and the vast majority are given the right to remain, but the problem does not go away when they turn 18.

"If they are in any form of education, then KCC is still responsible for them and has to support them financially with accommodation all the time they are in education, which could be up to the age of 25."



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DELAYS: They have waited for years for justice while thousands have died as a result. Now there are concerns the Brexit vote will mean the focus is removed on finally solving the key issues

Will Westminster chaos cause yet more pain for blood victims?

CAMPAIGN: Chris Britcher on how blood contamination scandal campaigners fear more delays...

THOSE who lost their good health as a result of the blood contamination scandal say they fear the chaos in Westminster following the EU referendum could further delay their fight for justice.

And one leading Kent campaigner says further delay could deprive many the chance to ever see justice served as diseases they developed as a consequence claim their lives.

KoS has actively campaigned for the government to finally deliver a fair and sensible compensation settlement to those whose lives were forever changed after being infected by contaminated blood given to them by the NHS.

The majority of infections occurred during the 1970s and 80s when blood products – primarily used to treat haemophiliacs – were sourced from a variety of places.

Among them was blood coming out of the US where companies used donors which included drug addicts and prisoners.

Haemophiliacs suffer from a condition where their blood does not clot as it should. That means when they bleed often it cannot be stopped without treatment.

Many received, often as children, a blood product called Factor VIII. This they took as a temporary measure to allow their blood to clot and was self-administered in the main. But it was often infected with blood that carried the likes of hepatitis C and HIV.

It is estimated some 4,800 haemophiliacs were infected with hepatitis

C, which causes damage to the liver often resulting in cancer, while 1,200 of those were also infected with HIV – the virus that leads to AIDS.

It is estimated some 2,000 have died as a consequence.

Despite an apology from prime minister David Cameron and a vow to re-evaluate the compensation payment system, so far campaigners have seen little change and calls for a public inquiry fall on deaf ears.

A consultation into the issue, which concluded in April, looks almost certain to suggest only a slight revision to compensation payments and not the lump sums to secure their future many desire.

Sue Threakall, of the campaign group Tainted Blood which represents victims, said: “The reaction to the consultation has been one of dumb despair even among seasoned campaigners.

“There’s absolute shock that a government that has been working with us and seemed to think they could get it right has got it so catastrophically wrong.

“It needs to go back to the drawing board. The government needs to say we got it wrong and we’re going to revisit this – not in six months or 12 months but now.”

Steve Dymond, 60, from Broadstairs, was infected with hepatitis C when he was young. It saw him cut his career in education short and robbed him of having children. He receives a little over £14,000 to support himself and his wife as a consequence and has no other income.

Speaking to KoS this week, he fears the chaos caused by Brexit may cause yet further delays as the Conservatives face the prospect of new leader, new cabinet and the complications of handling the realities of Brexit.

In addition, the Labour Party’s bitter in-fighting has seen shadow secretary Heidi Alexander resign.

Mr Dymond explained: “The fallout from a spat of political infighting which resembles a wet Friday afternoon nursery school class squabble about who has the brightest colour pencil, is set to heap yet more waves of prevarication and procrastination onto victims who have campaigned for justice and overdue compensation for more than 30 years.

“This bitter saga continues against a backdrop of human misery suffering and a relentlessly rising death toll.

“Visitors to the Kent County Show have endured certain discomforts over the years; whether it be the frustrations generated by the traffic or the uncertain climate; however disagreeable at the time, these experiences would seem to pale into insignificance compared with the never ending wait for the victims of the contaminated blood scandal to be granted just recognition for this treatment disaster and due compensation from a government proved liable time after time for visiting this devastation on the small vulnerable community that are haemophiliacs.

“Whitehall continues to crawl away from its responsibilities. The solemn pledges from a soon-to-be ex-prime minister David Cameron, in 2014 to a



VICTIM: Steve Dymond

constituent haemophiliac ‘give me six months to sort this out’, to the House of Commons in March 2015 ‘as a wealthy country we will pay compensation to victims of contaminated blood for something that should not have happened’ now sound sickeningly hollow as he wimps out of public life for his own convenience.

“That a sordid punch up between politicians about the vital question of relations with the EU, should have degenerated into political and administrative paralysis set to last several years, will astound most people. It is Westminster’s own Operation Stack, paralysing much work in progress and unleashing chaos and uncertainty. A general election? A referendum result overturned by MPs? Reshuffles of ministers and shadow front bench? Officials snowed under

by an administrative nightmare of untangling legislation and endless negotiations? A new Conservative leader with zero knowledge of the contaminated blood scandal and even less a public commitment to its just resolution?”

Speaking in the House of Commons this week, health minister Jane Ellison rebuked a claims by SNP MP Martyn Day the government was “dragging its feet” over the payments.

Conservative Ms Ellison said: “No one is dragging their feet and we are trying to get this matter sorted out. I have had a number of discussions with the cabinet secretary for health and sport, Shona Robison, most recently last Thursday.

“We are working together to facilitate the increased payments, using the current scheme administrator. We want the payments to be made as quickly as possible to people who were infected in Scotland and across the UK. Officials in the Department of Health... are working closely together to expedite the matter.”

The suggestion now is that they will be no official confirmation of the revised compensation scheme until after the summer recess. And for campaigners that will heighten fears the Tory leadership changes will create further delays; while all the time those who were infected with Hepatitis C or HIV are dying or facing serious illness as a consequence.

The question of justice for those victims of the contaminated blood scandal may prove as far from being suitably resolved as ever before.

Councils look set to merge but will it become a unitary?

East Kent authorities in talks to become a 'super district' but could the long term plan be to break away from Kent County Council and follow Medway's lead?

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

TALKS have started to merge five district councils into one 'super council' in order to cut costs after wave-upon-wave of local government budget reductions.

The move is a response to an invitation by central government to local authorities to propose new ways of working together under its devolution agenda.

Leaders of Thanet, Canterbury, Ashford, Dover and Shepway have taken part in a "series of discussions" about options for closer collaboration between one another.

And it appears they have not ruled out forming a unitary authority – similar to when Medway split from Kent County Council.

Kent is currently ruled by a two-tier system, consisting of KCC on top of a dozen smaller district and borough councils.

At the moment, KCC looks after

services including schools, social care, public health, community safety and transport.

District and borough councils are responsible for services such as planning applications, rubbish collection and housing.

Supporters of unitaries, or at least a more joined-up approach between districts, believe it to be a more accountable, connected and localised system of governance, arguing that the current setup is too complex, and that it leaves residents confused as to who exactly is responsible for what services.

A statement from all five issued this week said: "This work is in response to the government's devolution agenda, financial challenges facing local government and the opportunity to drive improvements and growth in the east Kent region.

"These discussions are in the very early stages and have led to a consensus to explore the potential benefits and savings that could be achieved through the merger of the five east Kent district councils,



MERGER?

What is the future for many of the county's town halls and for Kent County Council, left?

into a single district authority.

"It would also seek to explore the best place for services across the three tiers of local government – county, district and town and parishes – to ensure the most accessible and efficient services for the public.

"In the coming weeks, each council will consider a short paper seeking agreement to carry out a thorough evaluation of this opportunity.

"At this stage the reports are not seeking formal approval to go ahead with a merger but are seeking approval for a 'statement of intent' which then allows the councils to start exploring the options,

through a business case evaluation.

"The options will then be brought back to each council around the end of the year for formal consideration and should the business case show that there are significant advantages, there will of course be consultation before a final decision is taken."

While all discussion so far suggests a single bigger district council – therefore still sat below the KCC umbrella – the statement does not rule out the potential of going down a unitary route – similar to that by Medway in the late 1990s.

Paul Carter, leader of KCC, has previously been critical of the idea of cre-

ating unitaries amid fears it could dilute and ultimately bring about the end, of the county council. But this week threw his weight behind the planned merger as an effective way of managing resources.

"I believe that, without a shadow of doubt, one district instead of five will deliver greater efficiencies," he told KoS.

"It remains to be seen whether the individual sovereign authorities sign up to this or not.

"The main priority for districts and for KCC is to deliver the most effective and efficient services with the money available to us from council

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"If districts can deliver more efficiencies, and we can do the same by pooling resources and co-commissioning, then that can only be a positive way forward for the residents of Kent.

"We are working closely with all 12 districts, and indeed Medway, to see how we can work together in the future to deliver more efficient services."

Thanet North MP Sir Roger Gale backed a move in principle when it was discussed by KoS earlier this year, and this week reiterated his support for such talks.

"I'm still very much in favour of this idea," he told us.

"The secretary of state [Greg Clark, who is also MP for Tunbridge Wells] is in favour of greater co-operation between councils, rather than creating a unitary authority.

"He wants a getting together and pooling of resources but I want to go the whole way, get rid of KCC and have three unitary authorities across Kent."

Cllr Carter said back in March he felt breaking up the county council would weaken Kent's position when it came to lobbying central government, but Sir Roger dismissed his



MERGE: Thanet District Council in Margate and, right, KCC's Paul Carter.

Conservative colleague's claims.

"I don't agree," he said.

"The interests of east and west Kent are not always aligned, but even when they are, there's nothing to stop them lobbying together.

"There is a genuine split in the county – the west is very metropolitan and regards itself as part of London, whereas the east is emphatically rural and coastal – it has its own identity.

"I firmly believe this is in the interests of east Kent."

The Green Party told KoS earlier this year that it would like to see six authorities providing services to populations of between 200,000 and 300,000 people, suggesting unitaries covering Thanet and Dover; Canterbury and Swale; Shepway and Ashford; Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling; Dartford and Gravesham; and Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells.



process to begin.

"Similar approval is being sought within our partner councils in Maidstone and Swale.

"The director of mid Kent services will be a Maidstone employee and, as such, will be on the Maidstone Borough Council pay scales.

"Each of the three authorities will contribute equally to the salary cost, which is a very efficient way for each council to have access to this resource.

"TWBC is committed to partnership working because of the benefits it offers in terms of efficiencies and potential savings.

"To date working in partnership means that TWBC has made considerable savings.

"Mid Kent services enables the three councils to share some or all of eight services which include environmental protection, revenues and benefits, legal services and debt recovery."

The Local Government Association says that setting up what it calls a 'combined authority' tends to take between 12 and 18 months to complete.

The process would include a governance review by every council involved and a government consultation on whether the authority will fulfil certain obligations, before parliament approves the application.



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Kent County Show shines bright

Tom Pyman headed to Detling for the first of three days which showcase the very best of this fine county of ours

THOUSANDS have already flocked to this year's Kent County Show in Detling, and with fine weather forecast for the rest of the weekend, organisers are expecting one of their busiest to date.

A unique showcase of all that's great about the county, punters have more than 400 stalls to explore until it all comes to a close on Sunday evening.

On Wimbledon finals weekend, sports fans can tuck into locally-produced strawberries and cream, animal lovers can enjoy the inaugural county show pig race as well as countless other activities for visitors of all ages.

With Operation Stack in force last year and torrential rain threatening to ruin proceedings in 2012, organisers have been preparing for the 2016 show for more than a year to make sure things run as smoothly as possible.

Show manager Lucy Hegarty told KoS: "The good weather helps but actually there's a lot to do undercover and inside so either way there's a great day to be had here.

"Variety is the name of the game here and we do try to put on something of interest for every single person and often people find things they



ATTRACTIONS: There's plenty to see and do for all the family at the show

assume won't be interesting they actually love.

"You can see steam engines move, bee keepers have got live hives, there's a flower show, food tents, live animals, so it's a day of experiences you wouldn't normally get elsewhere.

"It's a challenge to get new ideas but the public are really good at feed-

ing back in, particularly through social media but we also look at what other shows are doing, what's new out there, what's going on in Kent and try to showcase that over the three days.

"I'd like to think there's a sense of pride, our livestock exhibitors are very proud of what they do in the



county, most people on site are from Kent and it's their passion and drive that makes the show what it is."

Chairman Kevin Attwood added: "The show says a lot about rural Kent and agriculture as well as being a good day out so it's great to see people engaging with it.

"I think the weather is an absolutely critical factor, and people look at the forecast when planning their weekend, we have been lucky because June was terrible and this is the first dry, warm weekend for nearly a couple of months."

For a full review and more pictures, see next weekend's Kent on Sunday.

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CROWDS: Some 70,000 visitors are expected to flock to the show across the three days

Pictures: Andy Archert



DRAW: From art to fruit, there's lots of attractions to keep you busy



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Are you embarrassed by your teeth?

Get your confidence back with no downtime with this new Dental Implant system!

Dr Pieter Claassen of Hanover House, a local dental clinic is experiencing high demand for dental implants due to an advanced technique called PRGF which they offer to patients that are having dental implants.

This new system encourages healing at an accelerated rate which means patients are able to go about their normal, everyday life without any or very little down-time.

Patients travel from all over, demanding this unique treatment which is also being used to help sportsmen and women speed up the healing process following injury. PRGF stands for Plasma Rich Growth Factors, - referred to as accelerated healing by the Hanover House dental implant team.

The Problem

If you are one of the thousands of people suffering from missing or painful teeth you do not need to be reminded that it is very likely you will experience any or all of the following problems.

- Not being able to eat what you want
- Having to use fixative several times a day which is difficult to remove from your denture
- Your confidence has dropped
- You don't enjoy food anymore because of the denture covering the roof of your mouth
- You find yourself talking with your hand in front of your mouth to either stop a loose denture from moving or to hide an embarrassing gap



Pieter Claassen - Implant Dentist at Hanover House Dental in Tonbridge

- When did you last smile?
- You have bone loss where the denture is pressing on underlying bone
- You can often hear a 'funny sound' when the denture chews against another denture or teeth
- You have as constant fear you will lose or break your dentures
- Dogs love chewing dentures that lie unattended.

The excitement

For most of us suffering from ill-fitting denture, painful or loose teeth, all of the problems can be eliminated through the use of dental implants.

Dr Claassen says, "Most patients normally have dental implants to stabilise loose and uncomfortable dentures or to replace embarrassing missing teeth. Having fixed teeth again means that they can eat and enjoy the food they want and have the confidence to smile in family photos again."

PRGF is 100% Natural

The system is the magic solution that helps to speed up the healing process after the procedure, promoting our own unique healing factors to burst into action. Using the revolutionary PRGF system also increases the success rate.

For the first time ever Hanover House Dental Practice are offering the PRGF system completely free of charge when a dental implant is placed. Normally this amazing new treatment would cost £350.00 but for a limited period only Dr Claassen is offering it for FREE!

Clinical Results

In a study of 1391 dental implant placements using PRGF, the success rate was 99.6%. This shows just how special PRGF is, and as our free introductory gift to you, Dr Claassen wants to provide it free of charge - but not for long. In fact, you only have until Friday 8th July 2016 to take up this offer!

Patients who have osteoporosis often receive medication to strengthen their bones. Unfortunately, in some cases it can lead to the opposite - impaired healing of bone structure. PRGF is excellent for patients potentially at risk

of dental implant failure, shortening the time it takes for the body to accept your implants.

The Benefits

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"Pieter worked painstakingly to achieve the perfect finish. The dental implants have given me back my smile and confidence and I no longer have to worry about what I eat"
Mrs. P. Mahoney - Speldhurst

"Having dental implants was well worth the effort and the difference was extraordinary, making it the best decision I ever made. I used to be self-conscious about my teeth. I wouldn't eat in public in case my dentures fell out and I hated how they felt in my mouth. Since having dental implants I am so much happier. I can eat what I want, when I want, including apples and I am much more confident. Even my friends have commented on how happy and relaxed I look."
Stephen Barnham - Tonbridge

Ken, a patients of Dr Claassen at Hanover House Dental Practice says...
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DONE: Nigel Farage (above) stepped down as Ukip leader on Monday, this time for good, and has received praise from county councillors such as Roger Latchford (inset)

Ukip chiefs pay tribute to Farage as he steps down to 'get life back'

He lives in Westerham and stood in South Thanet, and members of the county's opposition party tell **Tom Pyman** there is still plenty of life left in Ukip following the resignation of their divisive leader

KEY Ukip figures in Kent say the party still has a crucial role to play in British politics despite the resignation of leader Nigel Farage this week.

Mr Farage, 52, who lives in Westerham and is an MEP for the south east, has had two stints as leader of the Eurosceptic party since 2006, and announced he was quitting the post after failing to win a Commons seat in the 2015 general election, only to change his mind days later.

However, this time it appears he is stepping down for good, after being a driving force behind the delivery of a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, which the country voted to leave last month.

In a speech in London setting out Ukip's strategy for the post-referendum period, Mr Farage said: "During the referendum campaign, I said I want my country back. What I'm saying today is I want my life back, and it begins right now.

"The victory for the Leave side in the referendum means that my political ambition has been achieved.

"I came into this struggle from business because I wanted us to be a self-governing nation, not to become a career politician."

Mr Farage leaves the national stage as one of the most divisive – and successful – politicians of modern times, but opponents within the party had

been keen to see him relinquish the Ukip reins so it could shake off its image as a one-man band.

The departure of such a polarising leader also makes it easier for the party to target traditional Labour heartlands it now sees as vulnerable, according to strategists.

Ukip is the main party of opposition to the conservatives on Kent County Council, and group leader Roger Latchford this week praised the impact of Mr Farage, comparing him to military leaders and insisting Ukip owes a great deal to his work over the last few years.

He told KoS: "I was very surprised and saddened to hear Nigel was stepping down because he has been absolutely outstanding.

"We would not be here today, where we want to be, without him.

"He has brought us from having just a few people to becoming a main party with over four million votes.

"We have our first district council, we are the opposition on KCC and it could not have happened without him as leader.

"I have a military background and have served many leaders but he is outstanding and up there with the best.

"He leads from the front with a human approach and he really listens to people.

"I'd agree that he's an influential figure, he's the man of the moment."

“ We need someone to speak for ordinary people like Nigel did and with Labour and the Tories in turmoil there is now a real opportunity for Ukip ”

Chris Wells,
Ukip leader on Thanet council

Conservative MP Craig Mackinlay, who beat Mr Farage to the South Thanet seat, rejected the suggestion that he was the most influential figure on the scene, and also told us last month he felt Ukip no longer served a purpose following the Brexit result.

Cllr Latchford, however, dismissed such a suggestion and felt the future for the party remains nothing but bright.

"Nigel has done his bit because his aim was to get sovereignty back for the country, and he has achieved the start of that process," he said.

"The role of Ukip now is to keep the pressure on to ensure the MPs listen to the will of the people which the referendum has given them – we have got a very clear role to play.

"The turmoil in the other parties

gives us an opportunity but I think it's also important to stress the importance of the Conservatives selecting a Brexit leader, it would not work otherwise.

"They have got a mandate to serve the country and we need to make sure they do that and don't fly their own kite."

Kent has proved to be a key stomping ground for Ukip, as the party last year gained control of its first council in Thanet.

Leader Chris Wells echoed the thoughts of Cllr Latchford and said Mr Farage's resignation was difficult news to take.

"On a personal note, Nigel has devoted 20 plus years of his life to the single aim of achieving Brexit, and steps down having seen that vote won just two weeks ago," he told KoS.

"I have always found Nigel the most personable, open, and supportive national politician I have ever met or worked with.

"He will be sadly missed as a colleague, a truly motivating leader, and the voice for ordinary people's real concerns, so often put to one side by others in the political establishment.

"As indeed, they have been both during and since, the referendum campaign.

"It's difficult because he is synonymous with Ukip and our campaigns but I understand why he has done it."

Cllr Wells joined Cllr Latchford in

dismissing the comments of Mr Mackinlay and felt the coming months and years could be a profitable period for the party.

"Now we have to be out there finding a new leader to continue the direction of the party," he said.

"We need someone to speak for ordinary people like Nigel did and with Labour and the Tories in turmoil there is absolutely a real opportunity for Ukip.

"We have taken over from Labour as the voice of the British working class."

The new leader will be in place by Ukip's conference in September but Mr Farage insisted he would keep "very quiet" about his potential successor.

Douglas Carswell, the party's only MP, has been locked in a bitter feud with Mr Farage but ruled himself out of a leadership bid.

"The chances of me standing to be Ukip leader are somewhere between nil and zero," he told the BBC's Daily Politics.

But Ukip's deputy leader Paul Nuttall indicated he was taking soundings with fellow MEPs and the party's national executive committee about a bid to replace Mr Farage.

The North West England MEP would boost the party's chances of taking votes off Labour, something Mr Farage identified as key to Ukip's future.



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MP says we have 'blood on our hands' following Chilcot findings

Simon Allin gauges the reaction of Labour and Conservative figures in the county to the long-awaited report into the circumstances leading up to the decision to invade Iraq made by Tony Blair in 2003

In a rare show of unity, Conservative and Labour voices from across the county combined to agree with the findings of the Chilcot report published this week – a highly critical summary of the reasons behind Britain's key role in the Iraq war in 2003.

And while there was condemnation of the then prime minister Tony Blair's decision making, calls for any further action against the former Labour leader were muted.

Former immigration minister Damian Green, MP for Ashford, explained: "It is obviously very shocking. I think people will say unkind things about Tony Blair, but what worries me even more is the weaknesses it exposes in the whole government structure.

"There were problems with the advice, and with the civil service, and it shows how many lessons need to be learned by the whole government machine.

"I doubt impeachment [of Blair] will take place. There may be civil action by some of the relatives, but that is a matter for them."

In another explosive week in Westminster, the focus switched from the impact of Brexit and the leadership wrangles of both the Labour and Conservative parties to the events leading up to the controversial military move to topple Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The inquiry, led by Sir John Chilcot, which had been gathering evidence for more than six years, was published on Tuesday.

Thanet North MP Sir Roger Gale, who voted in favour for the strikes – an argument built around a now discredited intelligence report which suggested Saddam had weapons of mass destruction capable of being ready to attack the West in 45 minutes – says the impact of that decision was significant.

"I believe we were misled," Sir Roger told KoS. "I was one of 15 or 20 backbenchers called in to see Iain Duncan Smith [leader of the Conservative opposition at the time] and Michael Ancram [then deputy leader], who said they had been briefed by Blair that the country was at risk, that there were weapons of mass destruction and we had a duty to support the government.

"On the basis of that, most of us reluctantly agreed to support the government of the day.

"I lost a young constituent in that war, and I believe that blood is on our hands."

Criticism of Mr Blair was not confined to the Tory party.

Following Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's very public apology on behalf of the party for the decisions, leader of the Labour group on Kent County Council, Gordon Cowan, formerly a member of the Royal Engineers, said he initially supported the



DEFENCE: Tony Blair has faced criticism this week after the report by Sir John Chilcot (pictured below) was published after more than six years.

war because of the intelligence reports and the speeches made on the subject by Mr Blair.

"I always said that we should wait for a second [UN Security Council] resolution before any further action should have been taken," he commented.

"US president George W Bush said to Blair we need to act now.

"The report is not saying that he lied. Fundamentally, it is the fact that he reacted far too soon without the resolution. The report is not saying Tony Blair lied, but what will come out of it we will just have to wait and see," he added.

While Mr Blair claimed the subsequent strife in Iraq could not have been foreseen at the time, the report finds that the risks of regional instability, internal strife and Al Qaida activity were 'explicitly identified' before the invasion.

Nevertheless, Mr Blair has responded with a defence of his record on Iraq. He said: "The report should lay to rest allegations of bad faith, lies or deceit.

"Whether people agree or disagree with my decision to take military action against Saddam Hussein; I took it in good faith and in what I believed to be the best interests of the country."

Mr Blair did concede that the report makes 'serious criticisms' of the decision to go to war but reiterated his claim that removing Saddam Hussein was the better course of action and claimed it is not the cause of the terrorism we see today.

Vince Maple, Medway Council's Labour group leader, was opposed to the war in 2003. However, he said the nation should not tarnish the entire New Labour movement by that one decision.

"Myself and many other people were concerned at the time," he said. "Hundreds of thousands of people made their voices very clear on this and the report shows that some of those concerns were highly justified.

"Jeremy Corbyn has apologised and that is the right thing to do.

"I think certainly at the time across Kent there were concerns raised by many people, but many people will see some of the good things we did in government such as the minimum wage and Sure Start centres," Mr Maple said.

"People will look back and take a view of the decisions. From my perspective, the Labour government did some amazing things that helped communities in Medway and across Kent."

Alan Baldock, Canterbury City

Council's Labour group leader, added: "Labour must face up to the failures of 2003. It is right that we do that. It was right that Jeremy Corbyn apologised for Tony Blair's failures – we can do little more.

"Whatever Tony Blair says will never be accepted by people whose lives have fallen apart because of the war.

"The New Labour years made positive changes to people's lives but the war has overshadowed them."

Added Ashford Tory MP Damian Green: "It is a pretty thin line, not least because Iraq is in an even worse state now than under Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi people are suffering appallingly and have been doing so ever since.

"The politicians and the govern-

ment machine in this country need to learn lessons."

A view echoed by Helen Whately, MP for Faversham and Mid Kent since 2015.

She told KoS: "From my point of view, it is very worrying to get that insight into government decision making and how badly things can go wrong.

"To me, one of the very important things that needs to happen is to look at how government needs to change so this doesn't happen again.

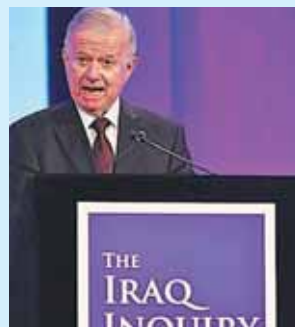
"It emphasises the importance of robust decision making and establishing a culture where people can and should challenge the prime minister in conversation about the important decisions."

MPS 'WILL NOT IMPEACH TONY BLAIR' SAYS GRAYLING

LEADER of the House of Commons Chris Grayling this week appeared to dismiss calls for parliament to impeach Tony Blair over the Iraq war, saying it is "not the job of this House" to consider taking action against individuals.

It comes after the Chilcot inquiry found Tony Blair led the UK into the disastrous war eight months after privately assuring George Bush "I will be with you whatever" in a letter.

The families of dead servicemen have called for Mr Blair to be taken to court and former Scottish first minister Alex Salmond said he should be investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for a crime of aggression and face parliamentary action to



stop him holding public office again.

Mr Grayling said: "It is not for this House to consider whether there are specific measures that



can be taken against individuals, that is a matter for the relevant authorities and it is not for us as a Parliament to debate those matters."



Golden girl Victoria

Olympian Victoria Pendleton swapped pedals for pumps last weekend as she ran the Run or Dye event at Penshurst

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

MORE than 4,000 runners joined Olympic cycling champion turned horse racing jockey Victoria Pendleton at Penshurst Place on Sunday to take part in 'the world's most colourful' 5km run.

Ms Pendleton was running to raise money for charity at the Clinique Run or Dye event near Tonbridge.

She became a household name in 2012 after winning the gold medal in the keirin in the London Olympic Games in the velodrome as well as silver in the sprint.

She has nine world titles and dominated the individual sprint competition between 2005 and 2012.

She was rewarded for her efforts on the track with an MBE in 2009 and CBE in 2013.

Remarkably, after leaving cycling, she has now made a name for herself in the competitive horse racing world.

And it was her legs doing the talking last weekend again as supported charity, Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital – as her twin brother was cared for by the hospital when being treated for childhood cancer as a



COLOUR: The event at Penshurst Place proved a major success

young boy – by completing the course and getting doused in coloured dye in the process.

All participants were encouraged to get head-to-toe covered in colour, before running, jogging, dancing or walking to the finish line.

Inspired by the ancient Hindu festival of Holi, also known as the 'Festival of Colours', the event saw participants run through the five Dye Zones which ensure there's no getting away from the all-encompassing colour.

Ms Pendleton said: "It was fantastic seeing so many people out making one difference – whether to their fitness or by raising money and with everybody really enjoying themselves.

"It was an honour to help host the event and to help share the message never to limit yourself, whilst also driving funds and awareness for Great Ormond Street Hospital's Kiss It Better Appeal, which is very close to my heart."

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Poker star's £100,000-a-year play

Tom Pyman speaks to the 28-year-old who once had trials for major football teams, but after injury crushed his dreams, has switched to a profitable career cashing in his poker chips in tournaments

ADARTFORD poker player has set himself a target of winning £100,000 in the next year after scooping top prize at a Texas Hold 'Em tournament.

Joe Stoyles, 28, juggles his time between the football pitch, the Canada Farm Kennels business he owns and the poker table, but admits he hopes to make the latter a more permanent home in the coming months.

Mr Stoyles came out on top of 338 entries in the partypoker Grand Prix Poker Tour Mini tournament at the Rendezvous Casino in Brighton, winning £4,700 and a free entry to the next event in the process.

"It was a really tough field so I was delighted to win," he told us.

"It was my second biggest win yet, having previously won £12,000 at another tournament but I had to play my best and it was a great achievement."

Supported by his partner Natalie Colangeo, 25, a primary school teacher, he has been playing poker for six years.

"I've only recently started taking it more seriously but it's like anything, the more you practice, the better you get," he said. "It's funny how it started though – I just deposited £10 online, didn't have a clue what I was doing but managed to win £500."

"So I thought to myself 'if I can do that, how much money can I win if I know what I'm doing?'."

"So I'm playing more frequently now, probably twice a week either online or in small clubs, and it's given me more confidence to start playing in big tournaments."



WINNER: Joe Stoyles after winning £4,700 at a poker event in Brighton recently

"I'm going out to Vegas and Barcelona soon and it's certainly given the bank balance a boost."

"I'm quite optimistic – I want to win £100,000 in the next year and I can do it if I'm disciplined and put in the hours."

"I'm writing up a plan and I've got a good network of friends and a stable family so I'm happy."

Like so many young men, Mr Stoyles saw a promising football

career cut short, having player semi-professionally with the likes of Queens Park Rangers and Dover Athletic.

However, he still continues to play and believes it actually gives him the edge over his opponents on the poker table.

"I was about to be offered a professional contract at QPR but my knee kept swelling up. I was actually given a misdiagnosis, but the club had

made up their minds and had the contract terminated."

"A few other clubs were interested but eventually a job came up where the money was so good I just had to take it but I gave football a good go and still play to a good level now."

"I've got some trials in a few weeks and playing regularly helps me in poker I think because when you are doing long hours, a lot of people neglect their health and eat badly."

"So I think my fitness and being a bit sharper mentally gave me a good edge and it's important not to give that up."

Addiction to gambling is something that plagues the lives of many people in Kent, but Mr Stoyles says he is very much on top of any kind of compulsion when he takes to the table.

"I don't think I have a problem at all, I just like winning money," he said.

Mr Stoyles, who has a four-year-old mastiff cross called Frazier, says he is dedicating his poker win to a well-known fellow player Chinese Frankie who was a regular personality at the Dusk Till Dawn in Nottingham – Europe's biggest poker venue.

"He was one of the first to put his arm around me and offer to help when I was starting out."

"A lot of people when they lose get stressed and are quite rude but he was always so good."

"Sadly he passed away recently and it was completely unexpected – a massive tragedy."

"Everyone feels the same, nobody had a bad word to say about him so I wanted to dedicate the win to him."

Now Mr Stoyles moves onto the partypoker Grand Prix Poker Tour of football clubs – held at Brighton's Amex Stadium on July 23 and 24.

This event has a buy-in of £77 and a prize pool of £175,000.

Tom Waters, boss of partypoker, said: "Joe did brilliantly to win against a strong field of players."

"It was brilliant to see genuine grassroots poker players turning their £77 entry tickets into big money paydays."



WIN: Joe Stoyles and tournament director Simon Trumper at the Brighton event

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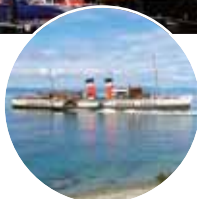
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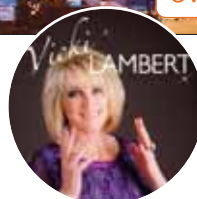
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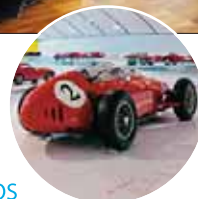
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Doubts linger 20 years on after horror of the Russell murders

Chris Murphy takes a look back at a crime in 1996 which stunned the nation and continues to fuel speculation as to who committed it. Plus an appeal for a mystery witness who saw a KoS news report

THERE are few more tranquil places in the county than the countryside which rolls majestically between Canterbury and Dover.

Amid the oast houses, stately homes, quaint villages and breath-taking vistas, lies the village of Goodnestone. It's a tiny place, somewhere you have to go looking for to find.

This week it was the epitome of peace. Amid some rare warm sunshine, the loudest noise was the tweeting of birds and the occasional hum of someone tending their garden. It's the sort of place where doors are left open and the rare traffic is more often than not to visit the carefully manicured gardens of the local Goodnestone Park mansion.

Close to the 12th century church is the village school with the motto 'small is beautiful'. And it is hard to imagine anywhere more idyllic in which to grow up.

Yet it was here, exactly 20 years ago this weekend that a crime of such brutality it stunned the nation, shook this normally peaceful hamlet and sent fear along its narrow streets and country lanes.

On the afternoon of July 9, 1996, Lin Russell, 45, left her home in neighbouring village Chillenden to collect her two young daughters from school. It was a little later than normal as they had attended a swimming gala in Canterbury. As she did so often, she walked across the fields to reach the pretty school – accompanied only by the pet dog, Lucy.

Shortly after 4pm, Josie Russell, nine, and sister Megan, six, greeted their mother and the trio started the short walk home. They would never arrive.

That evening, Dr Shaun Russell, the girls' father and husband of Lin, was beginning to get agitated. Concerned as to where his family were, the lecturer at the University of Kent alerted police to start a search.

The following morning, the world awoke to discover the bodies of three people had been found in a country lane. Lin and Megan were dead. Josie was alive – but only just. Even the dog had been slaughtered.

The Russell murders, as the case would become known, continues to generate headlines today.

Doubts continue to linger over the guilt of Michael Stone – convicted and jailed for the horrific crime – while suggestions continue Levi Bellfield, who killed Milly Dowler, may have been involved.

Either way, the quiet communities today are scarred by the experience but all these years on, have returned to the peaceful living and tranquillity.

Josie, following her return to health, and her father have long since left the area – moving back to Wales and very deliberately keeping a low profile – getting on with their lives.

Yet the nation remains transfixed.



SOLVED? The Russell family before attack killed Lin, far left, and Megan, far right. Right, Michael Stone above, arrives at court, and Levi Bellfield.



While the focus has moved from the scene of the crime, those responsible continue to haunt the headlines.

Following a Kent on Sunday story last February about the murders, a witness came forward to say she saw a man looking just like Bellfield driving a Ford Sierra in the Chillenden area at the time of the attacks.

Stone's lawyer Paul Bacon told us: "After you ran that story, we received information from a woman who phoned to say she saw a man looking like Bellfield in the right car in the right place.

"But the number we have for her doesn't seem to work, and I would urgently appeal to Kent on Sunday readers to help find this potential witness and get her to ring me again.

"She could hold incredibly important evidence that could finally find the killer of Lin and Megan Russell."

He added: "I have an appointment to see Mr Stone on July 14 to further discuss the case. He has always maintained his innocence, and this could be the breakthrough that is needed. He was convinced on the flimsiest evidence, and I am worried the real killer has so far escaped justice."

Stone is certainly no angel. He was a known drug addict, knew the area, and was seen destroying clothes on the day of the killing. He also had form for using a hammer – the murder weapon – in a previous crime.

Stone's sister Barbara told KoS she is as sure as ever of his innocence, but has doubts about Bellfield.

She said: "I know my brother didn't

do it, but I am not sure Bellfield did it either."

At her home in Chatham, she added: "He is supposed to be released in seven years, but he knows he is never going to get parole. He is a political prisoner involved in a case that many people know about.

"He should be released now, which is why I am keen for anyone with any evidence, even after all this time, to come forward with it.

"I know he is innocent convicted on poor evidence – I just have to prove that to the rest of the country."

Stone was jailed for life in 1998, and a string of legal actions to get him released have since failed. In 2001, an Old Bailey retrial saw a jury again find him guilty.

Five years later, a High Court judge

decided he should serve a minimum of 25 years behind bars, so including the time already spent in jail, he could be released in 2023, but as his sister states, the notoriety and brutality of the killings means this could be difficult.

The case also saw a change in the law. The government decided the Mental Health Act needed an update to ensure people who are considered mentally ill and highly dangerous can be held in secure psychiatric hospitals against their will for the protection of the public.

Retired Dept Supt Nick Biddiss has admitted to niggling doubts about the conviction in the past, but says the ruling of the jury must be respected. He told us: "The fact remains Michael Stone was found guilty and

even after the appeal, the conviction was upheld."

Kent Police added: "There are no updates, no new evidence and we're not looking for anyone else in connection to the case for which Stone was convicted."

While the doubts remain, the case continues to have the ability to rise up the news agenda once again.

For now, though, the villagers of Goodnestone and Chillenden carry what happened here.

Life continues. And as school children spill out of the school this week, the next generation look to a future where what happened here 20 years ago is a horror confined to the history books.

■ The mystery woman can contact Paul Bacon on 01623 624 505.

JOSIE & HER FATHER: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

IT IS perhaps fitting that Josie Russell now focuses her attention on creating beauty.

Now 29, she and her father left Kent behind shortly after the attacks which claimed her younger sister Megan and mother Lin.

They returned to Wales and the support network they had there prior to moving to Kent. After finishing school and university – where she studied graphic design and art and design, she began life as an artist; much of her work inspired by the natural

environment and Welsh culture.

She has hosted a number of exhibitions and describes herself as a "freelance textile artist based in beautiful Gwynedd, North Wales where I am currently available for commission".

Her recovery is quite remarkable. She was left for dead in the attack, suffering from head injuries many feared she would never fully recover from. When police first appeared at the murder scene they assumed she had been killed. It was only when

an officer detected the slightest movement that she was rushed to hospital for treatment.

Yet, as the nation willed her on, she made a remarkable return to health.

She is also an ambassador for the Born Free Foundation and says she had a "deep connection with the countryside".

Meanwhile, her father Dr Shaun Russell, who worked at the University of Kent in Canterbury continues to work at Bangor University.

Golden glow at the palace for flower show treat

The RHS Hampton Court Flower Show brought out the stars and the sun as Kent designers took home top awards

By Simon Allin

simon.allin@archant.co.uk

TWO gardens designed by green-fingered experts from Kent have scooped medals at this year's RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

The show, organised by the Royal Horticultural Society, is second only to the Chelsea Flower Show in terms of prestige but lays claim to being the biggest flower show in the world, with thousands of visitors flocking to the event which started on Tuesday and concludes this weekend.

The county was well represented throughout the show with entries across the various categories including the likes of Canterbury College and Leeds Castle.

In addition, there were entries from Ashford, Sevenoaks, Herne Bay, Sandwich, Headcorn and Rochester.

And there was delight for John Warland, from Tonbridge, who finally got his hands on a gold medal after back-to-back silver gilts at the Chelsea show.

He previously won gold four years ago.

His World Vision garden, inspired by a children's charity, was given the top accolade in the show gardens category.

Featuring 6ft-high floating waves of turf, the World Vision garden is inspired by the plight of children around the world, with each wave symbolising an individual life.

According to the designer, the undulations represent the unpredictability and vulnerability of life, particularly for those living in areas



TREAT: The actress and model Kelly Brook, above, took a trip from her home in Kent to attend the event held in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace. It is the biggest flower show, in terms of size, in the world. All pictures are courtesy of the RHS.



WINNERS: Our Lives in Time's Hands, above, and the World Vision garden which both impressed the judges

affected by poverty and disasters.

In contrast, the meadow of 1,000 ox-eye daisies symbolises the purity and innocence of children, while the mature trees rising up from the meadow represent the hope and the support the West provide for children living in the world's harshest places.

World Vision is a charity that helps children around the world, and Mr Warland was particularly inspired by its work in Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis.

Sian Merrylees, spokeswoman for World Vision, said: "It is fantastic. John worked really hard and it is a really great way of getting our message across."

"He is a conceptual garden designer and because he sponsors a child in Bolivia he knows about the charity's work."

"He has been out to Bolivia and he knows the value of World Vision. He carries a picture of the child around with him, so it is quite personal for him as well."

"There is a message there, and it is a great art garden as well. The ribbons of turf that he made are technically amazing – he made them out of moulded steel."

"If you look at it, you think it can't be real grass, but it is real grass on the steel ribbons."

"He did a similar version at the Chelsea Flower Show, and he was able to expand it and he added the ox daisies to represent the innocence of children. It is quite stunning."

"This is the fourth garden we have done over the years and we are really delighted. John got a gold four years ago and since then he has won silver gilts, so we are pleased for him."

"Now that he has won the gold people will go and see it and learn about the work we do, which is fantastic."

"We work outside the UK, so it is great to be able to get our message across."

In the conceptual garden category, Hythe designers Mark Whyte and Abigail Ferguson won a silver-gilt for Our Lives in Time's Hands.

Sponsored by Hythe Garden Landscapes, it was inspired by Dungeness and the Kent coastline.

The garden features a giant wave, hand-crafted from more than 500 pieces of steam-bent wood, suspended in mid-air above a shore.

The planting reflects the natural

landscape of the coast, providing a display of colour and texture and acting as habitats for thousands of wild-life species.

Owner of Hythe Garden Landscapes Ben Powney said: "It has been fantastic. We were one point off a gold medal, which was disappointing initially, but we can take a lot of positives out of it."

"The designers knew how they wanted the garden to look and we worked with them to make sure it looked how they wanted it to look."

"We had a lot of input into how to get round the physical aspects of the design."

"It was very tricky and time-consuming. It was a mammoth task – each individual plank of wood has been put in a steam box and beaten into shape to make up the wave."

"It has been a lot of work, but a great result."

"The materials we have used are based on the fishermen's huts down at Dungeness and all the shingle was locally sourced."

"All the plants have been home-grown by us. They are all local plants – there's nothing you can't find at Dungeness."



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Children set to pay the price of rail firm's timetable slash

Southern, which operates services into Ashford and Tonbridge, is facing a torrid reaction to desperate attempts get its highly criticised franchise back on track

By Alan Jones
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

SOUTHERN Railway is coming under increasing pressure to reconsider controversial changes to its timetable amid fears of the "devastating" impact on rail travellers.

Kent County Council (KCC) said parents and schoolchildren will be among those badly affected by the decision to cut 341 trains a day in a revised timetable for a month.

And, in a withering letter to the company on Wednesday, the Conservative-led authority said Southern's changes will have a "devastating" impact on other people heavily reliant on rail travel.

KCC's transport councillor Matthew Balfour made the council's robust views plain about the "appalling level of service" in a letter to Southern's chief executive Charles Horton.

He said: "The proposed emergency timetable will not help at all those parents and pupils who desperately need to access their places of education."



PRESSURE: Charles Horton, former Southeastern MD, now CEO at GoVia, owner of Southern

PICTURE: ADY KERRY

"I trust that your company will reconsider the emergency timetable, which will have a devastating effect on those for whom travel by rail is the only viable and realistic option for their essential journeys."

Among services slashed are trains between Ashford and Rye and

those through Tonbridge.

Southern has come under fire for its handling of its train services in parts of London, East and West Sussex, Surrey and areas of Kent and Hampshire.

It has been hit by repeated strike action by the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) which is threatening yet more action as a result of reducing the number of conductors on its services.

Tom Tugendhat, MP for Tonbridge, has called on Govia Thameslink Railway (GTP), which runs Southern Railway, to lose its franchise.

He said: "Over the past few months the service on the Uckfield and Tonbridge-Redhill line has significantly deteriorated. It now comes as a surprise to passengers when a train runs on time."

"Govia Thameslink is clearly incapable of running a major rail franchise, and I would like to see it stripped of the Southern franchise immediately."

"I, and other residents in Tonbridge, Edenbridge and surrounding villages are fed up with the appalling

service which is prevalent across its network. Jobs are at risk as a result of employees being consistently late to work, children are behind in their education due to arriving at school late and families cannot plan from one day to the next."

"The service is appalling. I have spoken to Claire Perry, the rail minister, this week and I hope the government will take the right decision to strip it of the franchise as soon as possible."

Some passengers have lost their jobs because of delays to their trains, the transport select committee heard this week.

And MPs have been contacted by travellers angry at not getting home to see their children because of delays and cancellations.

The disruption has been caused by staff shortages and industrial action.

On Friday, the RMT offered to suspend industrial action for three months in a bid to break the deadlocked dispute.

It made the offer to Southern Railway, but only if the rail operator pulled back from making the changes.



Southern services have been disrupted for weeks because of industrial action, and a shortage of train crew, leading to daily delays and cancellations, causing misery for passengers.

In an open letter to GTR chief executive Charles Horton, RMT leader Mick Cash said: "I refer to the recent hearing at the transport select committee, where we were both asked 'what could be done to help resolve the current impasse?'."

"You will also be aware that we will have both had numerous conver-

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ANGER: Southern's plans to slash services – including those in Kent – as a result of staffing issues has prompted an angry response by both Kent County Council and the MP for Tonbridge, Tom Tugendhat.

sations with passengers and their MPs who are asking we go the extra mile in seeking a resolution to the dispute. I would therefore wish to develop the offer of the new approach I made at the select committee.

"The RMT will suspend calling any further industrial for the next three months if you will also suspend your proposals for a similar period.

"This will then allow us the time and space to sit down together and try and explore options that will seek to deliver the lasting improvements to

service and reliability we all want."

The company plans to make the changes next month, so that drivers will be responsible for closing doors.

A Southern spokesman said: "We welcome the offer of talks and a new approach from the RMT. We have been trying to actively engage them for the last six months.

"We welcome the suggested suspension of industrial action, but we don't need three months to resolve this. We are ready to sit down with the RMT and discuss a way forward

that we believe that they, our employees and customers will welcome, and can bring an end to this dispute.

"In the meantime we would ask the RMT to work with us, as previously requested, to address the main cause of the current service problems, which is the remarkably high levels of sickness amongst some RMT members."

Southern say there will be no job losses, and no-one will take a cut in salary, while the union believes conductors should retain a safety critical role.

TRAIN SERVICES TO BE CUT

SOUTHERN Railway is to cancel 341 trains – 15 per cent of its services – from next Monday, saying this will reduce the impact on passengers of weeks of disruption caused by staff shortages and industrial action.

This is what the cancellations mean for its services for Kent travellers and further afield

■ 95 per cent of the capacity at London's Victoria station in the morning and evening peaks will be maintained, along with 86 per cent and 84 per cent of the morning and evening peak capacity into London Bridge.

■ Trains will shuttle between Tonbridge and Reigate because through trains to London Victoria will not run, with the exception of three trains from Reigate in the morning – 0727 Reigate to London Bridge, and 0740 and 0752 to London Victoria. Passengers on the Southern Tonbridge route will have to change at Redhill.

■ East Coastway has no peak service reduction in trains to London, although Rye and Ashford shuttles are removed during peak hours, with replacement buses being organised. Extra stops are being put into Brighton to Ashford services to cover Falmer where Seaford services are to be withdrawn.

■ There will be no through services on the Metro route to

and from Beckenham Junction.

■ Southern's West London Line between Milton Keynes and Clapham Junction will be suspended, with alternative transport arranged with other operators.

■ Redhill station is largely unaffected during peak hours, but there will be no services to London Victoria off-peak – only Thameslink and Southern Horsham services to London Bridge – so passengers will need to change at East Croydon.

■ Gatwick Express services in the peak period are largely unaffected but there is a reduced off-peak service.

■ Between Seaford and Lewes, most services will be replaced by buses other than the Seaford to London Victoria services.

■ West Coastway Brighton to Southampton services are mostly withdrawn. Passengers should catch Brighton to Portsmouth trains and change at Barnham on to the London Victoria to Southampton trains which are still running.

■ Wimbledon services, which run only in the peak (six in the morning and three in the evening), are withdrawn but Thameslink has an alternative.

■ Guildford's two direct peak services to and from London Victoria (two to Victoria in the morning and two back again in the evening) are withdrawn.

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PAT, petite blonde lady, GSOH, young looking for her age, seeks genuine gent any age with GSOH. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422393

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673

RITA, seeks a genuine male for friendship, days out, she's very friendly, genuine and social, give her a call ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422403

KIM 32yrs, attractive blonde lady seeks discreet gent for daytime distractions. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3006 Box 421657

MERRY, widow, dark hair, kind and caring, hoping to meet a kind gent for friendship, possibly more. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422339

JANE, young 41, very broad-minded, seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715

BARBARA, is a caring lady who seeks a man to care for, she will do anything to make you happy. Just give her a call today. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422411

KERRY, 35yrs, married in open relationship, attractive, tall, slim and very presentable. Seeks discreet gent any age for casual pleasurable encounters. Tel: 0906 515 3042 Box 42236

ORIENTAL lady, honest, caring, loves walking, WLTW a reliable, sincere man for LTR. Text only Mailbox: 5443434

50YRS, old attractive lady. Sheila, caring honest, seeks discreet gent ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422469

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399

GENUINE, GSH, attractive, outgoing professional female, 55. Enjoys keeping fit, socialising and travel, WLTW similar male for relationship. Text only Mailbox: 5453851

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375

MATURE lady early 80s, family orientated, likes dancing, holidays especially cruising. WLTW similar aged gentleman with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421427

WENDY, mature, passionate ladylike divorcee seeks no strings casual friendship/fun with gent any age. Tel: 0906 515 3034 Box 421605

JO, mature understanding worldly Essex lady, seeks generous gent for regular fetish fantasy role-play, discretion assured. Text only Mailbox: 5320299

FELICITY, well educated, sophisticated lady, 38yrs, unhappily married and looking for a distraction with a man 30+, must be discreet. Text only Box: 4023417

FEMALE, blue eyes, slim and pretty, from South Africa, young fifties, seeking a sincere, retired gentleman, who resides close to the sea. Text only Mailbox: 5456242

LAURA, single mum, 29yrs, blue eyed blonde, fair skinned, pretty. Lonely and seeking adult company when the kids are in bed! ACA. Text Only Box: 4161735

SINGLE late 60s female, n/s, GSOH, likes going out and being active, not fun on my own, seeking single male, 66-70, n/s, with GSOH, to share each others interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421433

MATURE lady early 80s, family orientated, likes dancing, holidays especially cruising, WLTW similar aged gentleman with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421429

FEMALE, young 58, 5ft2, size 14, blonde, bubbly, GSOH, warm, loving, kind and caring, loves music, animals, seaside, looking for that special someone. Text only Mailbox: 4715158

GENUINE single female 49, seeking good-natured, intelligent, polite, single male for friendship/relationship. Text only to Mailbox: 4198603

KIND, caring lady of African origin, living in UK for past 20 years, looking for a gentleman who is kind and caring, must have a GSOH. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421041

LUCY, 32, blonde, tall and slim, looking for a casual fling, nothing serious. Discretion needed and assured. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 420237

BEN, kind caring gent, 37yrs, very tall and well built with curly black hair. Own home, good job, just missing a special lady. Text Only Box: 4158248

HAPPY go lucky divorced man, 48, 6ft, well built, seeks gorgeous female to share love and laughs with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383719

TONY black male, 58, 5ft6, med build, n/s, seeking a local mature lady loving female 40/75 in the Chatham/Gillingham area for discreet fun. Text only Mailbox: 5459052

BARRY 47, 6ft, well built, seeks female for wineing, dining and fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 361787

TALL single early 60's male looking for pure hearted lady for LTR. Text only Mailbox: 5496781

GARY 48, 6ft, well-built, dark hair, brown eyes, seeks passionate female for fun times in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 387175

VINCENT 48, 6ft, well built, seeks lady for fun nights in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 377397

MALE, widower, n/s, would love to meet buxom friendly lady, up to 70, for friendship at first, interests include all types of music, walking, quizzes. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422957

CHANTELLE, 5ft3 light brown/blonde hair, blue eyes, like nights in/out, walks, animals, romance seeks honest guy. Littlehampton. Text only to Mailbox no: 4923883

MARIE, very lonely middle-aged woman, looking for a kind hearted older man, late 70s/early 80s for friendship/companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418955

RACHEL late 40s, blonde, blue eyes and very voluptuous. Looking for a kind, caring honest man. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418741

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418117

HELEN, widow 58, medium build, 5ft 4ins, blonde, GSOH, likes a chat, days out, looking to start again with someone of similar age. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 376243

Men Seeking

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EDWARD, 77, looking for a companion South East area of Kent, for holidays, days out, social events, and lots more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423039

HELLO my name is Paul, 43, 5ft9, from Sittingbourne in Kent, looking for someone to have some fun with and see where it goes! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422905

WRITER, tall, slim, fit, natural dark hair, generous, seeks lady for erotic rendezvous, I will make it worth your while! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422777

49YR old male, 6ft, well built, seeks female to wine/dine and have fun with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 390929

SUGAR Daddy available! Mature, tall, slim, natural dark hair, seeks lady, age unimportant. Not afraid of commitment. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418889

48YR old divorced male, 6ft, well built, seeks lady for fun and laughter. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 380789

PHILIP, 66, into farming and country life, looking for a loyal, genuine lady, someone I can trust, to go on holidays with and spend time together. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422899

LIVELY old boy, OHAC, near sea in Folkestone, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks lady companion/lover, 58-68 y.o. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422621

SLIM, 5ft 6 white male WLTW 18 to 42 year old lady for friendship. Text only Mailbox: 5441709

FEMALE, 59, GSOH, many interests, seeks caring male for friendship maybe more, genuine calls only. Text only to Mailbox No: 4819793

GORGEOUS flower, Ashford Kent, 51, larger lady, large personality, easy going, seeks male who likes dogs, animals for relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 417435

FEMALE easy going, kind, loving, genuine, romantic, car boots, gardening, seeking male with GSOH. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 417603

PAT, 68, young at heart, slim, proud 4' 11" GSOH, N/S, likes walking etc Whistable area, seeks similar slim easy going male 60-70. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 419081

SUSIE fit, friendly, looking for someone to love and look after me, preferably, older, N/S male with own car. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 392537

MALE, 54, shyish, looking for fun times with a lady, 60-70, with GSOH, status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422431

PAUL 49 5ft 8ins likes eating/nighting in/out seeks loving female for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404013

PROFESSIONAL, romantic male, 44, likes meals out, cinema, music, holidays, seeks female, 30-55 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 250195

CHRIS, from Folkestone, 71, 5ft9, widower, green eyes, lonely, n/s, OHAC, likes gardening, the coast, pubs, dining out, holidays, cruises, days out, WLTW similar lady to share interests, can travel. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422375

PAUL GSOH, 5ft 8ins, medium build, seeking Miss Right for LTR to put the spark back into life. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 391790

MIKE, 64, outgoing person, enjoys life, likes sport, cricket, nice meals out, holidays, WLTW someone to share interests and quality time. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422329

COLIN, 56, 6ft, medium build, clean and tidy with a tidy beard, I'm after some TLC with no strings adult fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422359

HARLOW male, 40, kind, attractive, happy, considerate looking to meet slim female for LTR, children welcome. Text only Mailbox: 5468389

FRIENDLY passionate male, 55, 6ft, medium build, clean, discreet, lots of TLC to offer, seeks female for fun times. Canterbury Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 381222

OUTGOING male, seeking attractive female, likes sports, music, cinema and nights out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414793

PAUL 48, 5ft 8ins, GSOH, likes music, cinema, seeks female for fun, friendship and LTR. Tunbridge Wells. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 371985

HANDSOME male, mid 40s, dark hair, hazel eyes, wishes to meet appropriate female for fun, friendship and perhaps more, please get in touch if interested. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422587

LOCAL Sevenoaks man, seeks local lady for fun and friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 417127

PAUL 52, seeks loving female for exciting times, meals out, weekends away, cosy nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418077

MALE, 58, very outgoing, looking for attractive female, slim to medium build, for adult fun and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421883

RETIRED, smart, 68 year old, 5ft5, I enjoy eating out, walking, holidays and golf, WLTW a slim, attractive lady, 60-68, for a loving, tender relationship, to enjoy these times with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421853

MALE, 6ft, slim, 67, divorced, retired, likes social drinks, meals out, nights in and all other, WLTW lady with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421351

YOUNG 50s male looking for discreet daytime kisses and cuddles with nice female. Kent and Sussex. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421601

FEMININE sensual female, slim-medium build wanted by slim, kind male for daytime meets, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414809

EASY going, friendly guy, slim, n/s, likes the outdoors, gardening, cinema, theatre, music, WLTW a nice guy, 50-60s. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422741

PETER, bi male, aged 68, inexperienced seeks bi male for fun and friendship. Text only Mailbox: 5459879

MALE medium build, likes outdoors, DIY, seeking slim, N/S guy for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403267

MATURE bi male seeks similar for fun and friendship. Text only Mailbox: 4641909

EASYGOING guy, 62, likes outdoors, countryside, walks, seeks slim, N/S quiet guy for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 333477

FEMALE seeking genuine straight female for daytrips, out to meet socially for lunch/coffee. Text only to Mailbox No: 4748240

SEEKING ladies for good company, socialising and a bit of fun, BBW local to Kent, get in touch and lets start having fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413623

MALE 70's, fit, looking for lady to share life with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416663



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EASY going, friendly guy, slim, n/s, likes the outdoors, gardening, cinema, theatre, music, WLTW a nice guy, 50-60s. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422741

PETER, bi male, aged 68, inexperienced seeks bi male for fun and friendship. Text only Mailbox: 5459879

MALE medium build, likes outdoors, DIY, seeking slim, N/S guy for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403267

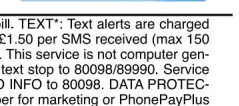
MATURE bi male seeks similar for fun and friendship. Text only Mailbox: 4641909

EASYGOING guy, 62, likes outdoors, countryside, walks, seeks slim, N/S quiet guy for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 333477

FEMALE seeking genuine straight female for daytrips, out to meet socially for lunch/coffee. Text only to Mailbox No: 4748240

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CHANGES: A lot has happened to Russell Kane in recent years - including a major image change

Festival date all set for Kane as he challenges age issues

Comedian Russell Kane has added an extra date to his tour at Haver this month

RUSSELL Kane is a busy man. Not only does his career now extend to stand-up, presenting, scriptwriting and acting, but he's also managed to combine getting married and having a baby over the space of the last two years.

And there's no sign of any slowing down yet.

This week he confirmed his latest comedy tour, Right Man, Wrong Age, would be performing at the Haver Festival on July 20. And if you miss that, he's at the Assembly Hall Theatre in Tunbridge Wells on September 17 and Margate's Theatre Royal on November 30.

He may be a little different to normal though, as he explains: "I've changed my hair, I've changed my look, I've thrown all my eyeliner in the bin. I literally went to my ward-

robe one day and got all my ridiculous clothes and took them to the Sue Ryder shop for some other man having a midlife crisis then bought the four exact same suits in different colours from Topman. Then I got my hair as flat as it can go and I thought, 'that's it: this is me now'."

In fact, the 41-year-old says he can pinpoint the exact moment when he needed to alter his outlook and write a new show.

"I'm always looking for the moment that can make me look ridiculous in a way that is compelling," he says. "I was in the middle of spray-tanning myself upstairs in these tiny pants when the doorbell went. I went downstairs in my dressing gown and this window cleaner was touting for work. He leaned in and said, 'I'm really sorry to disturb you: is your mum or dad in at all?' Initially you might have thought

this was a compliment, but it's really not. He could be talking about how I'm putting myself across so I thought 'clothes in the bin'. And at that moment, there was Right Man, Wrong Age."

In the world of stand-up, acts are continually expected to evolve and grow and turn over a significant amount of material every one or two years. For some this burden might prove too much, but for Russell Kane this is a challenge he relishes. "I'll keep changing, and I don't really ever want to stand still. I don't care if it confuses people about where I'm coming from. I'm protean; I don't want to be recognisable in five years' time; that's what keeps my writing going.

"One day I'm learning Spanish, the next I'm learning survivalism. I might do my maths GCSE next week: who knows?"

For now, though, Russell is focused on making Right Man, Wrong Age the best show it can possibly be. His topic this time around is how we never quite feel the life-stage that we're in and the age that we're at, whether we're 80 or 18.

"When you're 18, you look in the mirror and think 'I know what I want to do, so why am I trapped in this 18-year-old body?' while the 80-year-old is still waltzing and dancing around in her head. That's going to be my jumping off point and from there I'll do lots of accessible observations as well as the odd thinky bit.

"But I don't want to disappear up my own bum with this show. I just want to go on in my suit, like Michael McIntyre or Peter Kay, and just be funny and have lots of big laughs. My only job in life is to be funny."

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Whodunnit's rehearsals

EASTENDERS' star Alex Ferns heads to the Orchard Theatre in Dartford in September for whodunnit Rehearsal for Murder by the new Classic Thriller Theatre Company. It runs September 19 to 24.



Ross Noble's Brain Dump

COMEDIAN Ross Noble will perform his latest stand-up show at the Assembly Hall Theatre in Tunbridge Wells on November 15.

It will be the latest stop on his Brain Dump tour, which is currently visiting venues around the UK until the end of the year.

Tickets on sale now.

Historic gardens open

THE Gardens in Yalding is to stage its first public open day since it opened in April 2014.

The historic gardens are divided into 16 areas and all will be open. It runs from 11am to 4pm. Entry £3.



Theatre class free Q&A

BUDDING actors, directors and playwrights get the chance to learn the ropes at Sittingbourne's Avenue Theatre later this month.

Paul Doust, a qualified adult tutor with background in theatre, will host a series of workshops and will hold a Q&A on July 18 at what will be on offer at a free event at 7.30pm.

Robin on thin ice as the baddie in pantomime

By Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

SUMMER may not have got under way yet, but for many theatres, attention is already turning to their festive box office extravaganza; the pantomime.

And this week Chatham's Central Theatre unveiled its line-up for its production of Jack and the Beanstalk - running at the theatre from December 8-31.

Olympic gold medallist and Dancing on Ice head judge Robin Cousins heads an all-star cast as the Evil Fleshcreeper in the follow up to last year's record breaking production of Beauty and the Beast.

The former competitive figure skater became a national hero when he won his Olympic gold in 1980, as well as becoming the European champion in the same year.

Since then, he has starred in, produced, directed and choreographed many international TV ice shows, including The Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty on Ice, The Wizard of Oz on Ice, Toy Story on Ice, Andrew Lloyd Webber's



Starlight Express on Ice and the movie The Cutting Edge. He's also been a regular guest presenter and commentator for BBC Sport for the European and World Figure Skating Championships and the Winter Olympics.

He is no stranger to the stage either having appeared in Cinderella, Cats and The Rocky Horror Show in the West End as well as numerous pantomimes across the country.

Joining him as Fairy Fuchsia this Christmas will be CBBC favourite

Hannah-Jane Fox who is known to millions of younger viewers from her appearances in Millie Inbetween where she plays Millie's Mum.

Hollyoaks star Joe Tracini will be playing Simple Simon. No stranger to Medway, he grew up in Higham and went to school in Rochester. He is the son of comic Joe Pasquale.

West End performer Tracey Penn, who most recently starred in Made in Dagenham at London's Adelphi theatre, will be playing the role of Jack.

Tickets are on sale now.



CBBC: Hannah-Jane Fox



HOLLYOAKS: Joe Tracini

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On the scent of the perfect plant combinations

Struggling with strong smells or insect attack? Then the right marriage in your pots could resolve it

WE ALL want to be picking plenty of veg from our allotments, borders and containers – but there are ways to maximise the chances of a better harvest.

Companion planting works on the premise that planting certain things together will free one or the other plant from pests, or boost productivity. Scent and sacrifice play a big part in this equation. The strong scent of one plant can help prevent pests homing in on another which you consider more valuable.

What you plant with your crops can have a significant impact on your harvest. So, how can we reap the richest rewards?

French and runner beans: Grow sweet peas to climb up wigwams and other stakes among your bean plants and you should do well. Pollinating insects will be attracted to the sweet pea flowers and are then likely to pollinate your beans, plus they'll make the area look prettier.

Cabbages: Mix your cabbages with French bean plants, nasturtiums or Shungiku, the edible chrysanthemum, which can reduce attacks by caterpillars.

Greenhouse companions: French marigolds (*Tagetes patula*) deter whitefly from visiting your greenhouse. Plant a few under tomatoes to keep them at bay. Plant basil next to tomatoes to keep the aphids off, although they will go for the basil.



TOGETHER: A blend of tomato plants and marigolds

Nicotiana will attract whitefly, keeping them off other plants.

Herbs and nettles: Almost all aromatic herbs are generally beneficial, as their smells confuse pests. Chamomile is thought to be good for healing sick plants. Nettles are reckoned to be good for neighbouring plants and increase the volatile oils in such plants as valerian, mint, sage and rosemary, so the potency of many plants increases measurably when planted near nettles. Summer savoury, a strong herb, has been planted next to broad beans to protect them from black bean aphids.

Hyssop: Plant strong-scented hyssop among brassicas to ward off cabbage white butterflies. Artemisia is also effective for this, preferably in a sheltered spot so the wind doesn't

carry the strong smell away.

Mint: If you have an ant infestation in your greenhouse, tear off a bunch of mint and place it where the ants are congregating. They should disappear fast, but replace the bunches of mint every couple of days to ensure they don't return.

Use tall plants such as sweetcorn or peas to provide shade for crops that are prone to bolting, such as lettuce, coriander and spinach.

Leeks: Pungent crops such as leeks, garlic and chives can confuse insects including carrot flies, onion flies and leek moths, so plant them with carrots if you want to stop carrot fly ruining your crops. When leeks and carrots are planted together, their scents act as repellents for each other's pests.

Force Awakens returns

STAR Wars fans get the chance to see the latest instalment of the saga on the big screen again when it is shown at Whitstable's Horsebridge Centre in August.

The perfect summer holiday entertainment takes place at 3.30pm on Wednesday, August 17. Doors open at 3pm.

Tickets for Star Wars: The Force Awakens cost £5. Parents accompanying their children go free.

Band's summer show

THE Bexley Band performs its summer concert next weekend at the Geedes Place United Reformed Church.

Taking place at 7pm on Saturday, July 16, in Bexleyheath by the Broadway Clock Tower, the event will raise money to support a winter night shelter in the borough.

Tickets for the event cost £6. For more details call Paul Ayliffe on 0208 304 6392 or email paul.ayliffe@btopenworld.com.

Camp Rock's big hit

DISNEY's Camp Rock: The Musical romps onto the stage at the Theatre Royal in Margate next month.

The show, about a music summer camp that faces a fight for its survival, is based on the smash hit movie.

Featuring the hits This Is Me, Can't Back Down, It's On and We Rock, the production on August 6 is staged by the Salute Performing Arts Academy.

LeeFest adds to line-up

WE ARE Scientists have joined the line-up for this month's LeeFest, near Tunbridge Wells.

The New York band will join the likes of Lianne La Havas and Everything Everything at the three-day event at John Darling's Farm from July 28-30. The band said: "This is a jelly-filled lineup that, when combined with the peanut butter that is We Are Scientists, is going to make a hell of a sandwich."

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Airport plans can't crash land

THE case for airport expansion is built on sand; the vote to leave the EU must bring it crumbling down.

The transport secretary's announcement to delay the controversial decision on how to move forward with airport expansion in the south east is political manoeuvring at its most cowardly by a government in disarray.

More than that, however, passing the buck on this call demonstrates the Conservatives fundamentally miss the point. It is time to recognise that the case for expansion is fantasy.

It is, and always has been, a myth that the UK faces an airport capacity crisis; we already fly more than any other country, yet the huge budgets of the airport and pro-expansion lobbies are busy trying to convince us otherwise. All but one UK airport is under-capacity and demand is likely to fall, rather than rise, following Britain's decision to leave the EU.

Nine of the ten most popular destinations from Britain's busiest airport are short haul flights. Existing rail services could offer workable alternatives on most of these routes, thus freeing up landing slots for longer haul flights. As trains are ten times less polluting than planes, this would also be better for the environment.

We cannot hope to meet vital climate change targets while building major new runways – the two policies are wholly incompatible.

Furthermore, the economic case cited by the airports commission when recommending expansion was based on implausibly optimistic assumptions. These assumptions cannot claim any credibility, especially in light of the current economic uncertainty.

Keith Taylor,
 Green MEP for south east

Will Brexit now trigger exodus?

NOW that we are heading for the exit, it might be a good idea for the leaders of the other 27 remaining EU countries to ask their citizens (if they have the courage) if they also wish to leave the European Union.

It could be that, after all the verdicts are announced, we will not have an EU to negotiate with, as the Eurozone heads towards another Greek crisis.

Perhaps we could then go back to recreating a laissez-faire free trade

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Don't forget those who voted for Brexit

YOUR helpful coverage of the Brexit vote in Kent (KoS, ad nauseum) made clear just how many local Conservative MPs were supporters of Remain.

It will be interesting to see how they work within the new framework where the UK will now supposedly try to recreate a relationship with its chief trading partner while not remaining in the EU where at least it had a negotiating voice and a formal position to influence things.

For the MPs who supported Brexit, of which Canterbury member Julian Brazier was one of the most prominent, whether local people voted for or against leaving they now have the right to hold these figures to account for the promises about control and extra funds that they made when urging people to support leaving the EU.

On June 23, whatever people voted for, they did not vote to see their living standards fall, their security weaken, and their

position in the world decline.

So far, no clear plan has emerged about precisely how the British government in this new context can defend the economic and security interests of its citizens.

To urge on people such a radical new departure and then, when victorious, be bereft of clear ideas about how to take things forward would be an act of immense irresponsibility.

If people find that in four years time their livelihoods are not better, their education and healthcare system is not significantly improved by the extra funds promised through Brexit, and their universities continue to maintain their global position despite the withdrawal of easy access to EU research funds, then public fury will make what happened on June 23 look mild in comparison.

Kerry Brown
 Canterbury

zone, without all the stupid bureaucratic and political bits added on.

John Waker,
 Ashford

We're better off out of the EU

JEAN Nobbs claims those voting to leave the EU did not understand its functions (KoS letters, last week) but, on the contrary, we understand it only too well.

The original architects, Monnet

and Schuman, designed it to be undemocratic, providing a meaningless talking shop as a fig-leaf for democracy, while placing real power in the hands of unelected and immovable bureaucratic appointees.

The European Court of Justice is not, as we would understand it, a court at all, but a means of enforcing the decisions of the European Commission as it seeks to create a United States of Europe.

The replacement of British common law by the Napoleonic code used on the continent was set fair to destroy our most basic

freedoms and the inward looking economic policies being followed are ensuring that the EU is declining faster than any other economic grouping in the world.

Britain is not a tiny island. It has the fifth largest economy in the world, the fourth most powerful military forces, a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, is the fountainhead of the world language and possesses historic connections around the world, not least in the Commonwealth.

Only the most ignorant would wish to rejoin the failing behemoth across the Channel.

Colin Bullen,
 Tonbridge

No surprise he doesn't agree

YES, the NHS also wouldn't run without the British doctors and nurses, or anybody else who'd been recruited.

That's a nonsense argument Jean Nobbs. With unemployment running at 1.671 million and the cost running into billions, why ever would we be in desperate need to import more labour, other than to further inflate bosses salaries and cover up the inefficiencies of services like the NHS?

How can we be self-sufficient in food production, while we concrete over Britain to accommodate the burgeoning population and satisfy the EU 'set aside' policy, taking out land from useful production? Jean Nobbs must be too young to remember when our government subsidised farmers directly, rather than having to hand billions to the EU, to get some returned as 'a gift' from the EU.

Amongst other madness, the EU environmental protection included stopping the dredging of rivers, which once helped stop the appalling flooding this country has suffered in recent years.

There's no error in getting back our country from remote unelected bureaucrats with little idea of this country, it's people and problems! The EU has a £259 billion 'black hole' in it's budget, for which our share is £34bn. And there's a lot more to come.

Phil Granger,
 West Malling

Remember tiny letter last week?

UNITED Kingdom or little England?

Richard Ablett,
 Deal

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- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to

people living in the county.

9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.

10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent



Seasalter

by Jim Turner from
Whitstable

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By Steve Loader
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Jury favours new Mégane's looks

PREVIEW: Never one to shrink from the limelight, the latest Renault Mégane's fluid lines will win more admirers than ever before...

RENAULT'S Mégane family hatchback has never been short of style – whether you liked or hated the result. But there'll be no arguing over the good looks of the fourth generation car, arriving in showrooms now.

Not that Renault will allow anyone to dwell on the car's svelte lines for too long, as

The French marque is keen to tell us that it is also keenly priced and well-equipped from £16,600, and has features and technology hitherto seen only on cars from the sector above or the premium heights of the car market.

These include '4Control' four-wheel-steering and a huge 8.7-inch portrait touchscreen infotainment system.

Buyers will be spoilt for choice too with a 25-version line-up based on six familiar Renault trim levels, and powertrain choice between two diesels or thrifty and lively turbocharged petrol units, with CO2 emissions as low as a road tax exempt 96g/km and economy up to 76.4mpg on the official combined cycle.

Initially, the line-up will concentrate on the five-door hatch model, but a slippery looking Sport Tourer (estate) is promised for later this year, with the overall range getting hybrid and a further diesel power option next year.

Standard features are generous, including Renault's active and passive safety systems, such as



adaptive cruise control, active emergency braking and lane departure warning.

All versions also get a two-way adjustable steering column, and both front seats are height adjustable. Flagship performance models will feature the 4Control system, which Renault claims to deliver the agility of a shorter wheelbase vehicle:

at speeds of less than 50mph in Sport mode and 37mph in other modes, the front and rear wheels turn in opposite directions, by up to 2.7 degrees at the back.

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Representative Example

The sophisticated new Lexus RX combines sharp, chiselled design with state-of-the-art technology. Inside, unrivalled luxury and superior comfort with features like hand stitched leather ensure an altogether more rewarding experience.

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The MPG figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results. They are provided for comparability purposes, and may not reflect actual driving experience. RX 450h F SPORT fuel consumption and CO2 figures: urban 51.4 mpg (5.5 l/100km), extra-urban 51.4 mpg (5.5 l/100km), combined 51.4 mpg (5.5 l/100km), 127 g/km CO2.

*5.9% APR Representative, £1,500 Finance Deposit Allowance and £500 Centre Contribution 24-42 months only on Lexus Connect (PCP), up to 35% deposit and Guaranteed Future Value/Optional Final Payment. RX new retail sales. Ordered and proposed for finance between 1 July 2016 and 30 September 2016, registered and financed by 31 December 2016 through Lexus Financial Services. Participating Lexus Centres. Other finance offers available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Terms and conditions apply. 8,000 miles per annum, excess mileage charge applies over contracted miles, 17 pence per mile. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status, over 18s. Lexus Centres are independent of Lexus Financial Services. Lexus Financial Services is a trading name of Toyota Financial Services (UK) PLC. Registered Office: Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, KT18 5UZ. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Style effects create the best RX yet

Flagship SUV from Lexus has changed its image with sharp styling cues from its impressive little brother, the NX writes **Steve Loader...**

TOYOTA'S Prius may be the world's best known hybrid, but larger petrol-electric cars have worked better.

If you are loading a car with two powertrains – piston engine and fuel plus electric motor and bulky, heavy batteries – it is easier to lose the extra within the larger dimensions and overall kerb weight of a big saloon or SUV.

And this has worked for Lexus, Toyota's premium arm. Indeed, you might say Lexus' UK sales have survived against stiff German opposition lately thanks to its mainstay hybrid models.

So there's no doubt on the preferred choice from the marque's flagship SUV range, the RX: hybrid 4x4 rather than the thirsty petrol turbo entry model in front-wheel drive or 4x4 format.

And the RX (from £39,995) has always been one of Lexus' strongest models, largely due to company car tax efficiency, superb build quality, reliability, good dealers, slow depreciation, generous standard kit, and overall comfort levels – but it never appealed to the image-conscious.

It could be all change now though: taking its cue from the smaller Lexus



NX SUV, the previously staid RX gained some serious attitude when the all-new version appeared last year.

The new Lexus styling palette, including big gaping grille and multi-faceted bodywork has transformed the car's visual appeal. Blacked out rear pillars even suggest

the 'floating roof' effect that obsesses so many designers.

But you can't say the new look RX walks the talk: the driving experience still favours the stolid, comfortable tastes of its primary market, North America, rather than more dynamic European ones.

Admittedly, you do get the chance



to tweak throttle and suspension, but the pulse is unlikely to race.

The hybrid powertrain isn't really set up for sporty driving either, even if stabbing the throttle unleashes both petrol and electric motors and allows a 0-62mph sprint in 7.7 seconds.

The obstacle is really the CVT

Lexus RX450h Premier

Price:	from £57,995
Driving appeal:	★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★
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Running costs:	★★★★
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Best rival:	BMW X5

(continuously variable transmission) auto 'box: great for helping the car's economy but, by its very nature, it baulks at efforts to unleash the Mr Hyde in sensible Dr Jekyll.

However, if that's not your worry then the RX's appeal just got better than ever. All the old virtues remain, plus that exciting new look.

The cabin is superbly fitted out – if rather American in style – and you know that nothing will ever drop off or look careworn, even as the car eventually goes to the scrapper.

And while the RX is fractionally bigger on the outside this time, it is considerably roomier inside – front and back – with a genuine middle rear seat.

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Official Government Test Environmental Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO₂ emissions (g/km). Vauxhall Corsa range: Urban: 38.2 (7.4) - 76.3 (3.7), Extra-urban: 58.9 (4.8) - 94.2 (3.0), Combined: 48.7 (5.8) - 88.3 (3.2). CO₂ emissions: 133 - 85g/km.*

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- Exceptional customer service skills

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact

Julie Pain, Administration Supervisor on 01843 234558

Previous applicants need not apply.

Closing date: 19/07/2016 Interview date: 27/07/2016

Team Leader - Ashford

Full time 37.5 hours per week. Salary: £18,525

Qualifications and Experience

- Maths and English GCSE A –C Grade or equivalent
- 2+ years working in medical administration
- Good working knowledge of Word/Excel/Outlook.
- Supervisory/Team management

Closing date: 19/07/2016 Interview date: 28/07/2016

To discuss this opportunity or to arrange an informal visit, please contact:

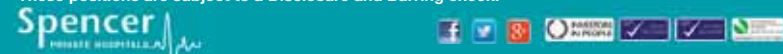
Gemma Preston, Business Office Manager on 01304 222682

For a job description and application form please contact: **Justine Whittle, HR Advisor**

Telephone: **01304 222684**

E-mail: **recruitment@spencerhospitals.com**

Spencer Private Hospitals is an equal opportunity employer. These positions are subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.



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Abbey Court School is located on 2 sites; Rainham (Primary) and Strood (Secondary and Further Education), and caters for pupils aged 3-19 with severe learning difficulties. We are looking for an enthusiastic and effective Speech and Language Therapist, with a professional, flexible approach and a good sense of humour. In essence, somebody with an interest in an educational setting and who would like to work in a school committed to enabling pupils to reach their full potential. Experience and dysphagia training desirable.

Candidates should hold a relevant Speech and Language Therapy degree/qualification. Benefits include: Local Authority pension scheme, induction training, performance management programme and Continuous Professional Development.

Visits to the school are welcomed.

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau Disclosure.

Due to the conditions and complex needs of the pupils at Abbey Court School, continuity and consistency of support is paramount, and therefore candidates for all positions will need to commit to the full working hours of the post.

For an application pack, or to make an appointment to visit, please telephone (stating the role for which you are applying):

Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent ME2 3SP
(01634 338236)

Please note CV's will not be accepted.

Closing date: 21 July 2016

Meopham School

A Member of Swale Academies Trust



Personnel Manager

£24,230 - £ 27,769 (£11,841 - £13,571 pro-rata)

20 hours per week, 42 weeks per year (term time, plus 3 weeks)

Swale Academies Trust seeks a Personnel Manager, to join a small team of staff responsible for managing the day-to-day HR administration of employee life and provide advice to the Headteacher, line managers and staff as required. In addition, the successful applicant will be involved in all aspects of recruitment from the creation of vacancies right through to offer and appointment stages. This will include responsibility for undertaking Disclosure and Barring Service checks where appropriate and maintaining the school's Central Record with reference to whole school safeguarding.

This is an excellent opportunity to gain further experience in the HR field within a complex and developing Trust of schools.

This role will be based at Meopham School, working closely with the Senior Leadership and with Personnel and Finance staff at other schools within the Trust.

Applicants should have at least two years' experience of working within an HR department and be educated to A level standard or hold, or be working towards, a CiPD qualification. They should have a proven ability to communicate effectively in writing and verbally at all levels and demonstrate the ability to be professional, approachable and tactful. Experience in an educational environment would be beneficial.

Closing date for applications: Friday 15th July 2016 at noon

Interview date: week commencing 18th July

Recruitment packs are available online (www.swaleacademiestrust.org.uk).

Please note, we cannot accept CVs without an application form. Applicants should include a letter of application detailing how they meet the requirements of the person specification and job description.

Contact details: Mrs Samantha Walker, Trust Personnel Manager,

Meopham School, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent. DA13 0AH

Telephone: 01474 814646

Email: swalker@swaleacademiestrust.org.uk

Meopham School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 14 OF APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

Proposed development at: Land at Forge Lane, Upchurch, Kent ME9 7AD

Take notice that application is being made by: Gladman Developments Ltd

For planning permission to: Outline planning permission for up to 110 residential dwellings (including up to 30% affordable housing), land for a potential car park for Holywell Primary School for approximately 40 spaces, introduction of structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children's play area, surface water flood mitigation and attenuation, vehicular access point from Forge Lane and associated ancillary works. All matters to be reserved with the exception of the main site access

Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted: Swale Borough Council, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the council within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Date: 10-07-2016

Statement of owners' rights: The grant of planning permission does not affect owners' rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease.

Statement of agricultural tenants' rights: The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenants' security of tenure.

'Owner' means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years. 'Tenant' means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.



Licensing Act 2003 Public Notice

Application for a New Premises Licence

Name of Applicant: Mr Rajan Musha

Premises: The Shisha Bar - 2 Minster Road, Halfway, Sheerness, ME12 3JD

Proposed Licensable activities:

Sale of alcohol - Monday - Sunday 18:00 until 23:00

Date of Notice: 26th July 2016

Any objections to this application must be made in writing to The Licensing Department

Swale Borough Council

Swale House

East Street

Sittingbourne

Kent, ME10 3HT

Objections must be received within 28 days of the date of this notice.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. Any person who makes a false statement is liable, on summary conviction, to a maximum fine of £5,000

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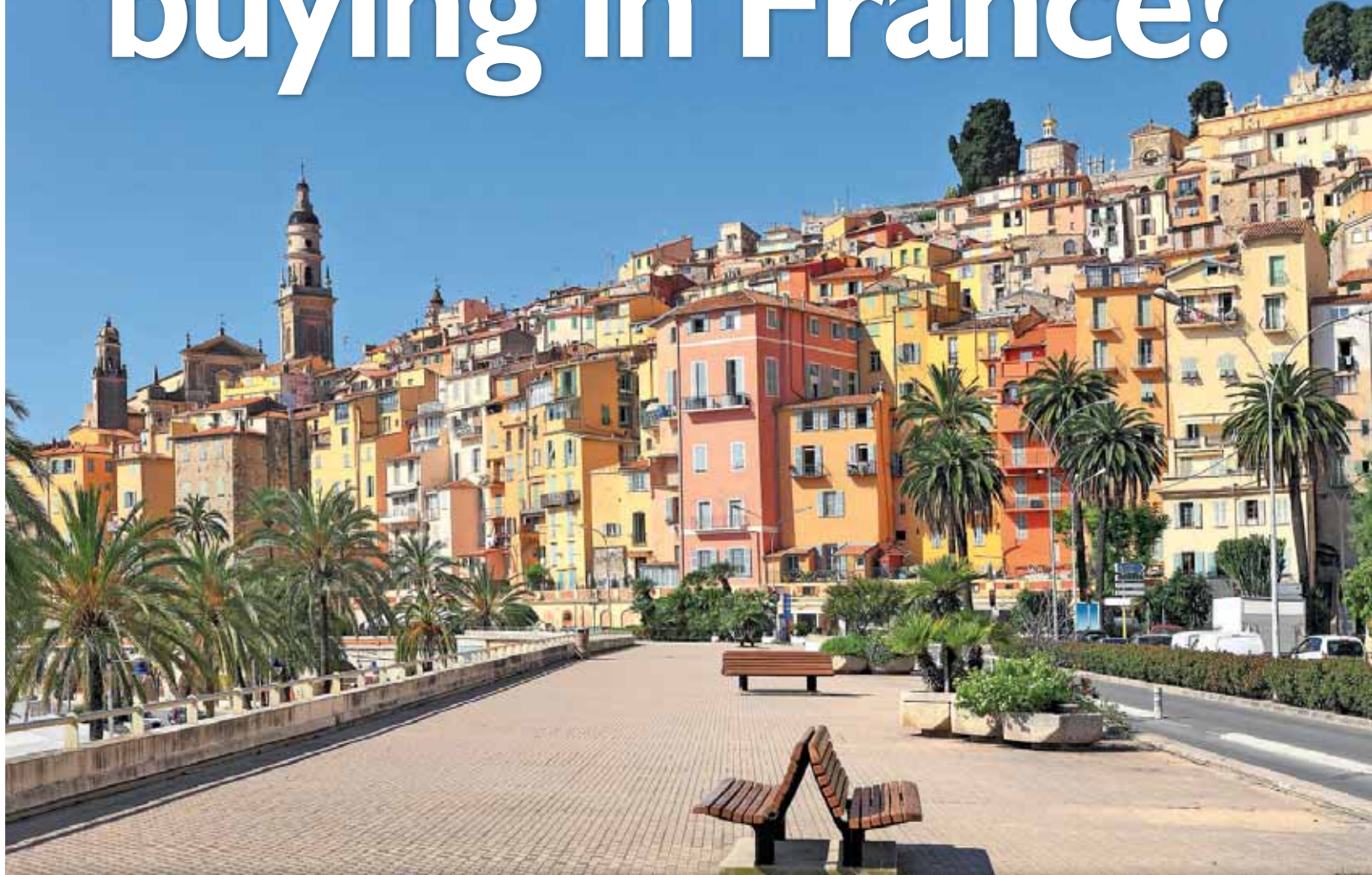
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Injury cuts down DBD in his prime

The Kent batsman was enjoying his most successful year yet

Cricket

By Mark Pennell

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

KENT batsman Daniel Bell-Drummond will be cursing his luck after being struck down by injury at a crucial stage of what has been looking his best ever season in the first-class game.

Bell-Drummond is already being touted as an England Test player of the future and has lived up to the billing this summer by scoring runs aplenty in all formats during the first half of the 2016 campaign.

The 22-year-old Millfield School prodigy has already scored almost 800 first-class runs, which includes a career-best double hundred notched during Kent's season's opener against Loughborough MCCU.

He averages over 44 in the T20 Blast having scored over 220 south group runs, and averages in excess of 45 following his four appearances to date in the 50-over Royal London One-Day Cup.

"I try to remain philosophical about the injury, but it's hard," said the Lewisham-born batsman, who hopes to be fit for his county's next home game at Tunbridge Wells starting on July 15, with the aim of bouncing back from this week's defeat to Essex.

"It's cricket for you isn't it, I find a bit of form and then go and pick up an injury.

"I came into the season with a few little niggles and was grateful to get through those, but this hand injury has hit me a little harder.

"I've had inflammation in a knuckle in my right thumb which I first felt in our away game down at The Rose Bowl in early June.



OUT: Daniel Bell-Drummond is cursing his luck after suffering a hand injury

"I tried to play through it but felt I was doing more harm than good in the end, so took a break to have a cortisone injection and calm it down.

"It's annoying to miss so many games with what seems such a small issue of wear and tear.

"It's made even more frustrating because the thumb injury means I can't play FIFA 16 on my Xbox either.

"But it's a long season and at least I have a chance to rest my mind, come back refreshed and looking to kick-on for the second half of the summer."

Shakey returns to favoured stomping ground

Motorsport

SHANE 'Shakey' Byrne takes to one of his favoured tracks this weekend, looking to close the gap on leader Leon Haslam in the MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship.

The Sheppey rider is 13 points behind his rival going into the fifth round in Norfolk, and is unbeaten on the Snetterton track, but the four-time champion knows that he has an all-new challenge this year with the Be Wiser Ducati as he bids to extend his winning form.

Haslam will be gunning for his first double win of the season after jetting back to the UK following a test in Japan ahead of the Suzuka Eight Hour event.

The pair shared the spoils in the



READY: Shane Byrne

last round at Knockhill in Scotland.

Christian Iddon holds third in the standings courtesy of his string of

podium finishes earlier this season, however he is yet to claim a victory in BSB.

It was his Tyco BMW team-mate Michael Laverty who topped the times at the recent official test at the circuit and he will be pushing to add to his Silverstone win.

James Ellison, Tommy Bridewell, Dan Linfoot and local contender Luke Mossey have all been podium finishers this season and will be fighting to the finish for the victories as will previous race winners Richard Cooper and Peter Hickman.

The Marham-based RAF Regular and Reserve BMW team will be pushing for home success with Alastair Seeley and rookie Jake Dixon having strengthened their challenge to a two-strong rider line up at the previous round.

Sport Shorts

» Email sports@kosmedia.co.uk or call Tom Pyman on 01233653477

Ex-Bennett Memorial student gets Wales nod

KENT was represented on the biggest stage of international football this week, when Wales took on Portugal in the semi-finals of Euro 2016.

Flying the flag was Jonny Williams of Crystal Palace, who was born in Pembury and went to Bennett Memorial school in Tunbridge Wells.

The midfielder was a second half substitute in a disappointing 0-2 defeat, courtesy of goals from former Manchester United stars Cristiano Ronaldo and Nani.

Wales have enjoyed a terrific tournament, though, beating England to top spot in Group B, despite suffering defeat to the Three Lions, before seeing off Northern Ireland and then defying the odds by beating Belgium - a team many fancied to go all the way - and are expected to return to a heroes' welcome.

The 22-year-old Williams spent the back end of last season on loan at League One side MK Dons and has also featured in the past for Ipswich Town and Nottingham Forest.



PRIDE: Jonny Williams



DEAL: Lee Martin and Deji Oshilaja

Martin and Oshilaja join in double signing

GILLINGHAM completed a double signing this week as they stepped up preparations for the new League One season.

Former Manchester United trainee Lee Martin joined the Gills on a two-year deal, while Justin Edinborough also brought back commanding centre-back Deji Oshilaja on a season-long loan from Cardiff City.

Martin, 29, said this week: "The

manager and I hit it off straight away; he sold the club to me.

"He's got lots of ideas about the season ahead, he wants me to show my experience in the changing room and help the other lads."

London-born Oshilaja, 23, added: "I always said I felt at home here, I get on well with everyone; the staff have been good to me so it was a no-brainer to return."

Open qualifying at Wildernesse

MORE than 100 professional and leading amateur golfers teed off at a Sevenoaks golf club last month as part of the regional qualifying for this year's Open Championship.

Wildernesse Golf Club secretary Andrew Lawrence said: "We are thrilled to have hosted this year's regional qualifying for the 145th Open Championship for the second year running.

"Despite the weather causing delays, it was great to see more than 100 competitors from across the world enjoying our course right to the finale.

"It is always an honour to play a part in the Open Championship and we hope it will encourage more and more people to pay us a visit and experience all that Wildernesse had to offer."

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